

Sacrificing the Subject:

The Pacific War in American & New Zealand Fiction Writing

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Among the challenges that came to bear on the writing and research environment, two stand out in particular. In 2008, there was an attempt to shut down the Department of American Studies at the University of Canterbury as part of cost-cutting measures, which put students and faculty on a defensive footing. Through the various factionalisms and the flurry of meetings that sprang up in the wake of this situation, research somehow continued and, in the event, the Department was not shut down. Another unexpected (but less discriminating) disruption took place some three years later in September 2010, when a 7.1 magnitude earthquake shook the city of Christchurch and brought about the closure of the university's Central Library for almost half a year. Two days after the library reopened, I found myself sitting at a computer terminal when a 6.3 magnitude aftershock swept through the city and, once again, put core university infrastructure out of bounds.

At the time of writing, this situation remains unchanged. Fortunately for me, the support of my supervisory team has proven rock solid even when the physical structures of our everyday working lives appear rather less so. In providing me with honest feedback over the years, Maureen Montgomery, Paul Millar, and Adam Lam have outdone themselves. Their academic mentorship has overseen my development as a researcher and as a scholar, and I consider myself indebted to them for their patience and many kindnesses. At certain times, Patrick Evans, Ken Henshall, and Mark Williams also made helpful suggestions, and Alison Parr was kind enough to grant access permission to her taped interviews, which are held in the Oral History Centre of the National Library of New Zealand. Many of the resources that came to bear on my thesis were suggested from these quarters, though naturally the responsibility for their inclusion into my writing rests with me and any flaws or oversights are entirely my own.

## **Abstract**

Theodor Adorno famously stated that there can be no poetry after Auschwitz, a declaration that decried any attempt to 'reform' literary traditions without taking into account the Nazi Holocaust and the associated behaviours of which human beings had proven themselves so capable. Creative writers had only to look at what transpired in Europe during World War II, if they followed Adorno's dictum, and their projects would necessarily self-terminate. But if one takes academic publications devoted to the literature of the Second World War as providing some indication of where scholarly attention most often falls, then the European theatre of operations invariably features prominently. In spite of Adorno's challenge, or perhaps inspired by it, creative writers, that is, have published plenty of material of interest to literary scholars of Europe during World War II, as have those who address their efforts to events and moments associated with the Pacific half of the war. However, the literature of the Pacific War has yet to feature prominently in published studies, and speculations as to the reasons for this deficit have fallen back on generalities rather than developed argument, which might in turn suggest Eurocentrism within the academy or a discourse of Orientalism within research outputs. Then again, perhaps Adorno's epitaph to creative expression has proven accurate in sentiment but not in its spatial-temporal marker – in other words, perhaps the Pacific War remains closed off to artists and scholars because of the moral, material, and inhumane imagery that surround its various nodal points. If that is the case, one must ask why this should be the case in literature of the Pacific rather more than in Europe. As a means to answer this question, I build upon John Dower's central thesis that the Pacific War differed from the European arena in its ideology of racial hostility, my intention being to provide readers a thorough investigation of the literary formations

that are associated with the war's 'signature moments': island combat, imprisonment, internment, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Utilising a comparative methodology, I introduce readers to hitherto unexamined New Zealand sources alongside better-known American 'equivalents' in order to determine whether Anglophone writers are uniformly interpellated by, or responsive to, the racial ideologies of the Pacific War, or whether New Zealand writers might have an 'exceptional' perspective originating in their geographical isolation and / or the historical particulars of their wartime experiences. The finished study contains material of relevance to scholars of race and ethnicity, twentieth-century literature, and war studies, as well as those members of the general public whose interests include the literature and literary history of the Pacific War.

## Introduction

Our intelligence having broken the Japanese codes, it had been learned that the Japanese were building an airfield on Guadalcanal Island – a potential threat to Allied supply lines from Hawaii to the South Pacific. We correspondents were openly told, with appropriate cautions about security, that the U.S. First Marine Division, then in New Zealand, would attack Guadalcanal about two weeks later.

John Hersey, *Into the Valley* (Foreword, 1989, p. viii)

The Pacific War could as well have been termed the 'Island Wars,' for in the history of human conflict no other war has had so much to do with atolls, archipelagos, reefs, and island clusters. In Europe, one is hard pressed to find any 'small' islands that had equivalent strategic significance to, say, Tarawa, Saipan, or Okinawa, though at various times Malta endured crushing aerial bombardments. Nazi Germany occupied the Channel Islands in mid-1940, but the allied invasion of Normandy in 1944 swept past the British territories, making the remainder of the war a decidedly continental affair. In the Pacific, things were different. There, the distances between the belligerents meant that abstention was possible only in select cases and could never pass as a general strategy. Figuratively speaking, the progress of the war described a 'U' shape, with Japan and the United States staring at one another across the topmost points, and Australia and New Zealand comprising the bottommost contours. As American forces began to curve upward into the underbelly of Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere, they started out from two bases, located in Auckland (the headquarters of Admiral Halsey's South Pacific Area), Melbourne and then Brisbane (the

headquarters of General MacArthur's South-West Pacific Area).<sup>1</sup> Cultures crossed and comingled in these antipodean removes, as American writers would somewhat ruefully recall. In Leon Uris' novel, *Battle Cry* (1953), for example, readers are treated to the outrageous scene of an American serviceman addressing himself to a married New Zealand canteen lady with the sole intention of having a casual fling (he gets more than he bargained for, being invited to her home and steadily 'New Zealandised').<sup>2</sup> There was a painful amount of truth to such recollections, and though the same thing was happening – had, in fact, always happened – wherever professional armies landed, the seeds of intercultural discord had been planted especially deep in New Zealand. When war broke out in Europe, the country's main expeditionary force had rushed to Britain's defence, as they had done a quarter century previously, leaving behind a 'spinster society' that endured over two years of nervous, celibate watchfulness while diplomatic relations between the British Empire and the Empire of Japan broke down. When the United States Marines arrived in June 1942, New Zealand's expeditionary force was still overseas, fighting as part of the British Army.<sup>3</sup> Romantic trysts of the Leon Uris variety were inevitable and, soon enough, unexceptional, as were fistfights, though the latter were not always born out of sexual rivalry. White New Zealanders violently disagreed with their guests over other matters, notably the matter of how to treat non-white minorities, which meant, in New Zealand's case, the indigenous Māori.<sup>4</sup> Sympathetic to the grievances of the host society, James A. Michener would

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1 Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), p. 465.

2 Leon Uris, *Battle Cry* (New York: Avon Books, 2005), p. 267-70.

3 For an explanation of the imperial defence system into which New Zealand forces were integrated, see Ian McGibbon, "New Zealand's Strategic Approach," in *Kia Kaha: New Zealand in the Second World War*, ed. John Crawford (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000).

4 Alison Parr, *Home: Civilian New Zealanders Remember the Second World War* (Auckland: Penguin, 2010), p. 222-3.



chivalrously portray the Battle of Manners Street as originating in the reactionary brutality of his fellow countrymen:

Instinctively, like an infuriated animal, Bill shot out his right fist and knocked the offending Maori [sic] down. "Don't knock into white girls, you damned nigger!" he cried.

When she got back to Christchurch Anne could not explain exactly what had happened next. "All I recall is that suddenly thirty or forty New Zealanders...Barbara, I was never so proud of New Zealanders in my life. One of them shouted, 'You'll not call our Maoris niggers!' There was a terrible fight."<sup>5</sup>

To anyone who is familiar with the wretched state of race relations in the United States at this time, sharply brought home to us in Chester Himes' novel of dockyard workers, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945), Michener's scene appears to both disclose and shy away from a violence that might otherwise provide an instructive basis for comparison. What is most intriguing is the way in which a national difference of character intervenes in a moment of violent racial difference; or, to adopt a more cynical judgement, the willingness of Michener to scapegoat his own countrymen in order to redeem a New Zealand culture of race relations that was not always as 'respectful' as his paternalistic scenario suggests. In either case, Michener was too fond of New Zealand, or perhaps too cognisant of the emotional scars caused by the aforementioned trysts, to delve too deeply. As a creative writer, he was fascinated by the ways in which some national populations experienced mass demographic upheaval during wartime, whereas others, left to their own devices, found themselves thrown together with allies in the expectation of amity. His task, as he saw it, was to 'doctor' the socio-cultural injuries by neatly encapsulating their formative moments and,

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<sup>5</sup> James A. Michener, "Until They Sail," in *Return to Paradise* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1951), p. 274.

wherever possible, showing his lead characters in their best possible light. Later writers would not always employ such an ameliorative narrative.

The Battle of Manners Street began as hearsay, soon became a parable, and ended up as a literary episode within the Pacific War. In their accounts of how New Zealand and the United States came together during the war, historians and creative writers would perennially return to it, if only in passing, because it encapsulated the fissures of difference (racial, cultural, or purely circumstantial) within the mores of two allied nations striving to work side-by-side in a war that was already split along the critical axis of race. So intriguing is the episode that one is left wondering, in retrospect, how else New Zealanders may have disagreed with their allies. More specifically, did they invest in the same metaphors of dehumanisation that Americans used to characterise the Japanese foe?<sup>6</sup> Or might a sense of national separateness have acted to check the assimilation and redistribution of 'foreign' ideological tropes and behavioural expectations? In the early stages of my research into Pacific War literature, those questions were foremost on my mind and I was inclined, somewhat hastily as it turned out, to see in New Zealand society a socio-cultural objectivity sorely lacking elsewhere. Even as it remained tantalisingly out of reach, there were grounds for advancing the hypothesis. British wartime propaganda, for example, invested in hateful narratives less heavily than equivalent American forms, an important distinction that raised the possibility of similar differences *Down Under*.<sup>7</sup> More elusive still was the possibility, often hinted at in New Zealand culture, that geographic marginality might have alchemised

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6 For a summary of these, see John Dower, "Race, Language, and War in Two Cultures: World War II in Asia," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II*, ed. Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 173.

7 Regarding British propaganda films, Michael Renov writes that "The bulk of British wartime documentary films feature persuasive tactics quite at odds with their American ally's interest in defining the enemy, focusing instead on producing wartime paeans to English stoicism and resistance." See Michael Renov, "Warring Images: Stereotype and American Representations of the Japanese, 1941-1991," in *Japan/America Film Wars: WWII Propaganda and Its Cultural Contexts*, ed. Abé Mark Nornes and Yukio Fukushima, *Studies in Film and Video* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), p. 103.

into some sort of cultural particularity. The intellectual mechanisms by which this takes place might appear obscure to scholars and researchers outside New Zealand, but they are a good deal more proximate to those within the country. Here it is necessary to imagine, if one can, how tempting it is to turn grumpy complaints about 'the tyranny of distance' into a constituent part, perhaps even the backbone, of a marginal-qua-exceptional cultural identity on the global stage. The everyday realities of sluggish internet speeds, long-haul flights, and postal deliveries to far-flung rural locations appear somewhat less tedious if viewed through this lens.

Of course, cultural exceptionalism cannot rest on geographic measurements alone, but the latter can and do feed into seductive inscriptions of New Zealand as 'untouched' – because 'unreached' or 'undiscovered' – and boasting a 'clean, green' pastoral landscape. These were some of the images Austin Mitchell took with him to New Zealand, and which he gently lampooned in *The Half Gallon Quarter Acre Pavlova Paradise* (1972). More recently, the 'paradisiacal' imagery has undergone a renewal, courtesy of film director Peter Jackson and his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, which tourist operators have seized upon as a chance to rebrand New Zealand as a giant theme park.<sup>8</sup> Whether knowingly or not, the producers and purveyors of the tourist film set / film set tourism are tapping into and enlarging a wellspring of popularised notions, the discursive power of which has penetrated almost every discipline in humanistic academe at one time or another. My own flirtation with the possibility of exceptionalism was admittedly more inductive, and sought to prove through contrastive analyses that, if New Zealanders did not take the same view of the Japanese as

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<sup>8</sup> Claudia Bell has drawn attention to the phenomenon that is *Lord of the Rings*, particularly as the film relates to and reinforces national fantasies of an 'untouched' country. As Bell puts it, "Local pride in the achievements of film director Peter Jackson, and the pleasure of recognising local sites in his films, make Middle-Earth a highly acceptable strand to add to national promotion campaigns. Middle-Earth, as amplified with Jackson's extraordinary high production values, lines up nicely beside Scenic Wonderland, clean and green, 100% PURE, and nuclear free." See Claudia Bell, "Branding New Zealand: the National Green-Wash," *British Review of New Zealand Studies* 15(2005/6): p. 23.

Americans had, then a difference in cultures between the two Anglophone nations would have to be considered, even if isolating its particulars might prove problematic.<sup>9</sup> Such a distinction, if demonstrable, would go some way toward complicating Edward Said's thesis on Orientalism. In his critique of Said's work, Daniel Martin Varisco observes that Said's scathing appraisal of the ways in which Europe misrepresented 'the East' was less mindful of the ways in which Europe had misrepresented its own 'West,' such as the Irish, who were considered by the English to be as barbaric or more so than many 'Eastern' cultures. As Varisco puts it, "By treating the West as the homogenized geographical space of Orientalists, Said avoids having to look at the implications of localized East-West differences within European history."<sup>10</sup> There are different 'Wests,' in other words, some of which, as in Ireland and New Zealand's case, are on the parenthetical periphery of Said's geography, such that their exclusion problematises the assumed integrity of his European 'whole.' The obvious question to ask, following this line of reasoning, is whether colonised 'European' countries like Ireland, or far-flung settler societies in the antipodes, themselves in receipt of an exoticising or othering discourse, might 'observe' non-European peoples differently than 'Europeans' do.<sup>11</sup>

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9 Among the challenges facing scholars who take New Zealand as a basis for cultural comparison, demography factors as a strong determinant that shapes our expectations of the frequency, circulation, and availability of source material in ways that scholars in more densely populated countries need not anticipate of their own cultures. While a substantial number of its citizens are resident overseas at any given time, the official population level of New Zealand currently stands at around 4,300,000, which, seen in perspective, is about the same as that of Rhode Island and Connecticut put together. Given that the population of the United States as a whole is in excess of 300,000,000, the competition for publishing fiction writing, and also the monetary rewards for bestselling authors, is considerably higher than in New Zealand, where the majority of published works go out of print within a year or two. While these differences may have qualitative implications where writing standards are concerned, they do not provide grounds to support any argument for cultural distinction. However, the 'gaps' within the body of published New Zealand writing might lead one to suspect otherwise. That there are topic areas awaiting further (or better) treatment by New Zealand writers, or their début within fiction writing, there can be little doubt, and within these interstices readers and researchers may find themselves tempted to imagine an 'undiscovered' or 'dormant' cultural particularity that has always existed while remaining as yet untapped.

10 Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*, Publications on the Near East (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), p. 52.

11 As I shall shortly disclose, this line of reasoning leads up a blind alley. Among the first European settlers and their descendants, there were indeed 'types' who were in receipt of an othering discourse, the Australian bushmen being an obvious case in point. Across the Tasman, those nineteenth-century settlers who married into Māori families, such as F. E. Maning, became known as 'Pākehā Māori,' a term that likewise suggested a cultural liminality and subjectivity

As a case study, the Pacific War provided a ready testing ground of literary material, mostly originating in the United States, against which I sought to frame New Zealand sources in a comparative framework. Structurally speaking, the research model was sound, and promised the added enticement of redressing the mistaken (but common) assumption that the war was tantamount to an American-Japanese affray, in just the same way that the Mexican-, Spanish-, or Philippine-American wars had been closed-off, dualistic military conflicts. Filling in the gaps inherent in this polarity followed on the research as a matter of course, but as the readings progressed the principal thesis of an exceptional New Zealand perspective became harder to sustain. To reintroduce an island culture into the literary history of a war that had involved so much ‘island-hopping’ was an alluring intellectual prospect, but it carried the risk of overinvesting in geography as a cultural determinant. Among the counterevidence, representations of German soldiers in American and New Zealand fiction writing appeared largely interchangeable; and whereas depictions of Japanese servicemen occur in New Zealand literature more fully than in American equivalents, this had less to do with sympathy for one’s enemy than the sense that New Zealanders had departed the Pacific stage for Europe (and were reluctant to write the Pacific War from an American point of view!).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, though Kiwis and Yankees had

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unknown to their English and European contemporaries. For some Pākehā Māori, their willingness to cross racial and cultural divides was symptomatic of a generally liberal or ‘accepting’ attitude toward ‘different’ cultures, while others maintained ‘selective’ opinions on whether socio-cultural mixing could work in all cases. In any event, the mythologies that sprang up around these (invariably male) figures tended to serve nationalistic ideologies that were entirely compatible with fears of an Asian (usually Chinese) other. As Mark Williams puts it, “On the Chinese, opinion was uniformly negative in both countries. Chinese in New Zealand, as in Australia, were not regarded as fading or as a source of mythological plunder or as susceptible of romantic treatment.” See Mark Williams, “Sentimental Racism,” in *East by South: China in the Australasian Imagination*, ed. Charles Ferrall, Paul Millar, and Keren Smith (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005), p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> The treatment of German soldiers in these two national literatures does not form part of my study, but cursory attention suggests alignment. The American author Irwin Shaw, for example, included a well-drawn portrait of an earnest young Nazi, Christian Deistl, in his novel, *The Young Lions* (1949). Throughout the story, Shaw portrays Deistl as being equally adept at rhetorical defence and military offence, and the reader thereby comes to an appreciation of Deistl as a character. If we turn to New Zealand writing, we find similar trends. Gordon Slatter’s novel, *A Gun in My Hand* (1959), follows the travails of a footloose New Zealand veteran going from job to job, as taut and shifty as a James M. Cain character. Part of this character’s wound-up fury is traceable to

differences of opinion in both the civilian and military spheres, the demands of the war meant that each came to appreciate the other's significance in ways that belied isolated flare-ups.<sup>13</sup> In the face of these challenges, I reframed my thesis. New Zealanders, it was now clear, had had the distance, geographical and experiential, to take a step back from the dehumanising vocabularies of the Pacific War, enduring neither the shock of Pearl Harbor nor the brutalities of the Kokoda Trail, and yet they had not done so. The virulence of wartime ideologies had penetrated even this tiny corner of the Pacific, and thus my study shifted away from inflecting a global phenomenon (war) with local colour (New Zealand's) and instead became a way of reintroducing the global into the localism and locality of New Zealand.<sup>14</sup>

The finished study, as it now stands, has value as a safeguard against the mistaken assumption that spatial distance from the war (geographically speaking) and sociable relations between Māori and Pākehā (New Zealanders of European descent) may have provided some guarantee against the more egregious forms of Japanophobic discourse. It also serves notice to those two larger dominions, Australia and Canada, that they too cannot invoke cultural essentialism, riding on the back of geographical niceties, as a way to locate 'particular' perspectives on the enemy, if they had any. As I now reflect upon the possibility of future researchers comparing American Pacific War literature with Australian

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the death of his comrade in Italy, whom he describes thus: "He was a wild man but a good man. He hated the war but he didn't hate the enemy because that was for civilians. He respected the front-line German because he was a damned good scrapper but he killed him because it was kill or be killed." No such sentiments emerged in either the United States or New Zealand to take the measure of the Japanese soldier as counterpart to as well as enemy of the allies. See Gordon Slatter, *A Gun in My Hand* (Christchurch: The Pegasus Press, 1959), p. 135.

13 For one thing, the prospect of war with Japan prompted New Zealand to appoint its first Minister to a foreign country: the United States. See M. P. Lissington, *New Zealand and the United States, 1840-1944* (Wellington: A. R. Shearer, 1972), p. 36-7.

14 Recent scholarly efforts that examine New Zealand culture have followed similar lines. For a fine example, see Miles Fairburn, "Is there a Good Case for New Zealand Exceptionalism?," in *Disputed Histories: Imagining New Zealand's Past*, ed. Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006).

or Canadian equivalents, I feel torn between the imperative to diversify the Anglophone literary heritage and the sense that, following my own project's observations, the grounds for such investment are questionable. Time may prove me wrong, but I wager that if the most 'distant' Anglophone nation should appear, on examination, rather less 'distant,' culturally speaking, than I had thought, then so too will the others.

But there is little call to overindulge in second-guessing or predetermination. More immediate and pressing is the question of how, or whether at all, American researchers and interested members of the general public in that country should pay attention to comparisons between their own rich literary heritage and, of all places, New Zealand's. After all, if the thesis is predicated on essential similarities, why take the trouble to acquaint oneself with a literature containing themes and issues that mirror one's own? To those readers who have waited long enough for book-length studies of Pacific War literature to appear in print, I can well appreciate the frustration of picking up a study that has been 'needlessly' inflected with another national culture, seemingly 'foreign,' but apparently coeval. While putting these issues to rest, I think it is helpful to recognise that one of the reasons that has kept book-length studies from becoming widely available is traceable to the lasting legacy of the ideologies and politics of the Pacific War.<sup>15</sup> Writers and artists struggle, and sometimes self-censor, while describing peoples and scenarios through the prism of well-worn stereotypes minted during the war itself; and for scholars, these handicaps – that which ought to comprise the central topic of investigation – become the very reason to remain disinterested.

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<sup>15</sup> Technically speaking, my study is not the first to examine Pacific War literature using the comparative method. That accolade must go to Elena P. Polo, whose study of American and Filipino literature, *The Negating Fire vs. The Affirming Flame* (2000), at least proved that such a project was feasible, though the author's failure to draw upon 'core' American texts such as those of Norman Mailer, James Jones, John Hersey, et. al. has resulted in a work of little relevance outside the intellectual circles of the Philippines.

My reflexive response to such demurrals is that, if the war remains present within one's national culture as a living discourse, then studying the phenomenon becomes all the more imperative, and comparative analysis may draw one's attention to the ways in which burdens are shared and managed across national boundaries. Readers may find themselves surprised at the extent to which Anglophone writers outside the United States have shouldered, or tried to throw off, literary problems and questions that, at first glance, look solely an American concern: how to depict combat against the Japanese, both in its raw military form and in terms of trade balances, for example; or how to face up to the history of one's nation as an internment state; and, most challenging of all, how Hiroshima and Nagasaki 'appear to disappear' under the author's pen. But while comparative analysis enlarges the scope of these questions, the questions themselves do not demand a comparative approach to retain their validity or sustain an address. American literature would amply suffice in both respects, owing to longstanding authorial investments in topic areas whose parentage is traceable to the pattern of (mainly American) military activities. This is no trivial admission. If one were comparing or compiling a 'representative' sampler of the literature that has emerged from other multinational conflicts in the twentieth-century, one could never make such a claim. When one recalls the Great War, for example, it appears especially difficult to justify. There, the wasteland and its attendant images were not the province of a single literary culture, but existed rather as a common thematic territory that each participating power could readily apprehend, in essence if not in detail.<sup>16</sup> It 'belonged' to everybody, and thus it is hard to speak of Great War literature without

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<sup>16</sup> The power of the wasteland imagery was familiar enough to readers and writers in the 1940's for John Hersey to make use of it in *Hiroshima* (1946), surely among the best literary efforts at drawing sympathy toward a vanquished enemy (though Hersey's use of the imagery betrays the fact that the Pacific War offered no 'equivalent' reference point in which Anglophone and Japanese writers could find similar meaning). See Patrick B. Sharp, "From Yellow Peril to Japanese Wasteland: John Hersey's 'Hiroshima'," *Twentieth Century Literature* 46, no. 4 (2000).



calling to mind Wilfred Owen, Erich Maria Remarque, and Ernest Hemingway, to name but three national writers. But the Pacific War gave birth to a surfeit of American literary material that, in terms of volume, far exceeded that of any other allied nation. As a consequence, academic studies must cement themselves firmly into this bedrock if they are to be worthy of their intentions, and also confront the question of where, why, and how comparison should take place.

Fulfilling the 'cementing' imperative, a task in itself, raises the dicey prospect of studying American literature of the Pacific War in ways that *just happen* to be comparative rather than being necessarily drawn as such. Here I must confess, against all expectations to the contrary, that indeed I do not believe one must necessarily approach Pacific War literature comparatively – not if one sticks to the Anglophone tradition, at any rate. My original thesis, predicated on the notion of an exceptional New Zealand perspective, would have done good service to advance an opposing case. Instead though, my dissertation writing has developed into a discourse that, as I have already said, contests the notion of exceptional perspectives. Military deployment, geographical distance, and an intact homeland go some way toward inflecting the circumstances and particulars of national histories and national literatures, but they do not suffice as a means to differentiate in absolute terms. American and New Zealand literature are embedded within similar ideological roots, though their 'inflections' make it equally mistaken to brand them 'homogeneous.' Alongside an anti-exceptional mandate, I therefore proffer the comparative approach as a way to guard against the mistaken assumption that what goes for American Pacific War literature does as well for the rest of the allies. Australasian researchers will be unsurprised to learn that the latter remains a common mistake in many published studies on the war. The essay collection, *Perilous Memories* (2001), for example,

demonstrated by its sheer diversity the need for critical perspectives on the war that diverge from American- and Japan-centred approaches. But in the process of compiling the volume, the editors appear to have arrived at a definition of 'allied' that conflates the United States with the larger Anglophone world.<sup>17</sup> Australia and New Zealand stood side-by-side with the United States, but in this collection they are implicitly one with the United States and thus they do not feature at all.

My own definition of 'allied' treads between the exceptional and the indistinguishable, allowing that, at times, degrees of cultural difference might be so slim as to be not worth bothering about; while, at various other times, they may be wide enough to lure one into making 'essential' differentiations of kind. I avoid both pronouncements in my readings of American and New Zealand literature, even as I deal with scenarios that appear to invite them. As a case in point, and an important historical intersection between the two regions, let us recall the basic facts of the gold rushes during the mid-nineteenth-century, when droves of fortune-seekers crossed oceans and continents in expectation of riches (then lost their fortunes and their health sifting through soils that had long since been picked clean). Once again, the American exemplar – more specifically, the Californian – provides the background against which to compare or contrast Australasian 'equivalents.' When the 'fever' first hit California in 1849, stories of outrageous wealth began to circulate that were, for a short period at least, generally true, but their mythical appeal outlasted the capacity of the land to follow through on the promises of gossip.<sup>18</sup> As the means of production shifted from placer mining to heavy industry, and as political organisations

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17 T. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama, eds., *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 4.

18 Malcolm Rohrbough, "No Boy's Play: Migration and Settlement in Early Gold Rush California," in *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, ed. Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi, *California History Sesquicentennial Series* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 28.

began to reflect special interests, white miners increasingly sought scapegoats for their unfulfilled dreams, and alternative destinations where the dream might still be alive. To partially fulfil the first need, nativists vilified the presence of foreigners in the fields, and more particularly the Chinese, who were quickly associated with the prefabricated stereotypes ascribed to blacks.<sup>19</sup> The Chinese were also feared on grounds that the 'coolie traffic,' then taking place elsewhere in the Americas, posed a threat to wage labour in much the same way that slavery then did.<sup>20</sup> These were exportable sentiments, and when news of New Zealand's Otago rush came in the 1860's, American and Australian miners at once set out for the South Island fields, carrying their Sinophobic attitudes with them.<sup>21</sup> These found ready purchase in New Zealand, and yet the lawlessness and violence of California were not to be repeated there. Chinese miners, already resident in Victoria, were invited to Otago, where their officially-sanctioned status provided a measure of protection from white violence and also ensured that the underground criminal organisations of the Chinese (or 'tongs') were either absent altogether or did not take root.<sup>22</sup>

What do these parallels tell us? Did New Zealand offer the Chinese an altogether different social and ideological environment than California had? By and large, the answer must be, once again, disappointingly negative. The Dunedin Chamber of Commerce looked to the Chinese more as a last resort, born of a sense of crisis traceable to demographic and economic imperatives rather than friendship. The smaller numbers of Chinese miners, both proportional and aggregate, also meant that New Zealanders were never fully 'tested' in the

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19 Dan Caldwell, "The Negroization of the Chinese Stereotype in California," *Southern California Historical Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1971).

20 Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 26-7.

21 Gordon Ell, *Gold Rush: Tales & Traditions of the New Zealand Goldfields* (Auckland: The Bush Press, 1995), p. 33-4.

22 James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, vol. 1 (Dunedin: Otago Heritage Books, 1993), p. 99.

way that white societies were elsewhere – the sense of social proximity to the Chinese was less strong, and thus hostilities were less manifest, though they were by no means absent. More definitely, we may say that the Otago gold rush warrants enquiry by virtue of its place within a series of trans-Pacific gold rushes, in comparison to which its moderate(d) demographic constituency may make New Zealand society appear somewhat ‘tame,’ though (on closer examination) not exceptional. But there is another reason, aside from illustrating the guiding principles of my comparative method, to keep the gold rushes in mind. Hitherto, I have spoken about ideological commonalities between the United States and New Zealand, and it remains for me to trace their developments and conjunctions. In the mid-nineteenth-century, Californian newspapers had demonstrated that black racial stereotypes could serve as well for Chinese, and over the course of a half century the iconography would migrate once again – this time across the ethnic-national boundary that separated China from Japan. The transfer process was gradual, and was at various times checked by the possibility that Japan would become colonised or perhaps even a new gold rush frontier.<sup>23</sup> But by the time of the first Sino-Japanese War, and certainly the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5, American, European, and Australasian observers had begun to see in Japan a rising military power that could protect its interests, and might one day challenge their own presence in the Asia-Pacific. The latter fears became steadily shriller as Japan’s colonial ambitions advanced, though the tone was tempered, initially by the possibility of ‘containing’ or ‘directing’ Japanese power by means of the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, and then by a sense of admiration for the ‘youthful’ energy of a rising nation.<sup>24</sup> At around this time, too, the

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23 For a study on Japan’s brief time as a gold rush frontier, see Ken Henshall, "In Search of the Pioneering Hoyt Brothers: Yankee-New Zealand Entrepreneurs in the 'Frontierland' of Early Meiji Japan," *New Zealand Journal of East Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (1994).

24 Scholars frequently note the Russo-Japanese War as the point at which Western curiosity toward Japan turned into alarm, but Patrick Porter has provided a corrective on this matter, noting that after the defeat of Czarist Russia, British observers saw in Japan a vision of themselves in a more vigorous, ambitious

Japanese embarked on a series of diplomatic and political measures, the intention of which was to improve relations with the Anglophone world. In 1903 and 1906, a naval training squadron visited several Australian port cities, attempting to assuage concerns that Japan would exploit its position as Britain's ally in the Far East for its own purposes.<sup>25</sup> A year later, the Japanese and American governments signed the Gentleman's Agreement, which placed restrictions on the eligibility – while keeping open the possibility – of Japanese immigrants bound for the United States. These measures meant that, at the beginning of the twentieth-century, Anglophone commentators could not make up their minds about whether to welcome Japanese ambitions or to fear their development.<sup>26</sup> The full-blown xenophobia and scaremongering of the war years were present, at this time, only in an embryonic and lackadaisical form, though it is possible to catch the moment in which Sinophobic discourses gave birth to their Japanophobic offspring. The gold rushes had increased public awareness, in Australia and the United States especially, of Chinese willingness to emigrate and build communities beyond their homeland. In the 1880's and 1890's, a series of 'future war' novels became popular in both countries, a good few of which predicted, and then went on to describe, the process by which Chinese expatriates and / or invaders would annex sections of the Anglo-Pacific for their own purposes. During the Russo-Japanese war, these stories began to diversify the object of their fears,

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stage of social development. Japan was indeed fearful, but also a vital source of lessons from which Britain might draw. See Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes*, ed. Tarak Barkawi and Shane Brighton, Critical War Studies Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 88-90.

25 David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939*, UQP Australian Studies (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), p. 89.

26 Ambivalent attitudes tended to characterise the response of New Zealanders as well. Being further removed, geographically, than Australia, they tended to feel the threat of a rising Japan less keenly; but, on the other hand, having fewer grounds to do business with the Japanese, New Zealanders felt fewer inhibitions about expressing their concerns. The result was the near total absence of outright alarm, but also a corresponding absence of alacrity at the prospects of the trade and partnerships Japan presented. For a study of New Zealand perspectives on the Japanese, as they emerged prior to the Pacific War, see M. P. Lissington, *New Zealand and Japan 1900-1941* (Wellington: A. R. Shearer, 1972).

sometimes fixing on Japanese, at other times on Russians.<sup>27</sup> The ‘future war’ novel acted as a conduit through which American and Australian readers became familiar with the idea of Japan as the new threat, and when the Pacific War eventually broke out some four decades later, the Japanese were objectified with the already familiar simian and / or ‘conqueror’ imagery popularised in the novels.<sup>28</sup> Nor did the images and narratives expire in the aftermath of hostilities. On the contrary, the most vicious iconography of anti-Japanese propaganda was deflected back into the realm of science fiction, safely camouflaged but discernible nonetheless. Among the well-known dystopias, the galactic insect empire of Robert A. Heinlein’s *Starship Troopers* (1959) and the monkey-ruled hegemony of Pierre Boulle’s *Planet of the Apes* (1963) are essentially allegories, complete in themselves, yet hauntingly redolent of the brutalising ideologies that had circulated just two decades prior to publication.<sup>29</sup>

The influence of future war fiction points to a literary history of the Pacific War that predates the twentieth-century, the depths of which would most likely demand a correspondingly enlarged research investment on a multivolumed scale. In such a project, the gold rushes would function as just one juncture in a temporal continuum made up of many such, and I have mentioned the rushes in this introduction mainly by way of calling

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27 Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full Metal Apache: Transactions Between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 66-70.

28 John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (London: Faber, 1986), p. 10.

29 One might read Heinlein’s novel entirely innocently, but for the dedication, which comes at the end. By taking the reader back down to earth, so to speak, Heinlein appears to be tipping us off that the violence within his work, which is nothing if not genocidal, occurred on our own planet no more than a generation previously. As for Boulle, his narration of a man who travels to the planet Soror, where he encounters a socio-racial hierarchy in which humans are treated as chattel, dithers between embracing the educative value of the scenario and stifling his own laughter at the ‘apish’ spectacle. As an example of the latter, the following sentiments are curiously akin to the ways in which Europeans and Americans decried Japanese achievements prior to the outbreak of hostilities: “My self-respect notes with satisfaction that monkeys have invented nothing, that they are mere imitators. My humiliation derives from the fact that a human civilization could have been so easily assimilated by monkeys.” See Pierre Boulle, *Planet of the Apes*, trans. Xan Fielding (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 142.

the reader's attention to the existence of a deeper historical context rather than doing full justice to that context. Though I admit to balking at any suggestion to make good the deficit, there are other reasons, besides magnitude, which make me hesitant to take those steps. Foremost among these, let us remember that our topic remains the Pacific War in its literary forms, and *not* the representation of Japanese and / or 'East Asians' down through the centuries. To be sure, the latter is an inseparable fixture in the chapters that follow, and scholars of race, ethnicity, and Japan Studies will find material of relevance to their research interests. But I write primarily for those who take interest in how war discourse continues to evolve through, and within, the literary culture of the participant nations after the cessation of hostilities. In terms of structure, this means that I have organised my chapters both thematically and chronologically, covering publication dates that take us from the 1960's to today. Briefly put, I assume the following thematic development: from the 1940's through the early 1960's, a literary investment in the combat novel, and in recollections of island fighting more specifically; from the 1980's to the early 1990's, the imagined return of Japan and the Pacific War within the corporate thriller; and from the late 1990's through to today, the decline of the prior literary themes. This final period, which allows an increased attention to marginal stories of victimhood, does not in practice result in any decline in the hostile ideologies of the Pacific War. Rather, it merely indicates that combat narratives are no longer the preeminent literary form that is brought to bear. As we shall see, prisoner-of-war novels, internment novels, and literature on the atomic bombings all articulate heavily politicised grievances that illustrate how wartime ideologies remain locked in place, containing the range of expression.

An additional context – actually, more of an open question – to bear in mind throughout the chapters that follow, is how creative writers and scholars endorse or contest

the relegation of the Pacific War to that of its European counterpart. The legacy of wartime ideologies is already sufficient to handicap efforts at creative engagement, and if there is another, equally debilitating, encumbrance then it surely lies in the swiftness with which the military commitment to 'do Europe first' developed into an artistic consent to put the Pacific War second. There was nothing inevitable about this process, and initially the first American literary efforts to encapsulate either the European or the Pacific halves of the war both fell back on the same literary model, specifically the coming-of-age novel in the tradition of Stephan Crane. Some of the resultant writing, such as Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* (1958), attempted to encompass the entirety of the war using a whistle-stop narrative from one battlefield to another. Others, such as Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny* (1951), recognised the futility of this endeavour and singled out one particular experience worth attending to, in this case a run-of-the-mill Navy ensign marking time on a redundant minesweeper operating in the Pacific. The ensign's service becomes more interesting when the captain of the vessel is forcibly relieved of his post, necessitating an extended trial scene in which the 'mutiny' is successfully defended by a Jewish lawyer who nonetheless disapproves the act on personal grounds. When the trial is over, this man gatecrashes a party and delivers a blistering denunciation of the sailors' disloyalty, arguing that the Nazi Holocaust obligates one to show gratitude to those career servicemen who, no matter their idiosyncrasies, were available for duty from the first.<sup>30</sup> His speech heralds a fall from grace for the mutineers but, more than that, it casts the entirety of the story in a petty, cheapened light. The spectre of the Holocaust lowers a shroud on the text, signalling the demise of oblivious narratives that seek 'refuge' in service branches other than the Army, or in regions other than Europe.

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<sup>30</sup> Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny* (New York: Doubleday, 1951), p. 429.



For the rest of the forties and fifties most Americans either ignored or remained unaware of the Nazi Holocaust, the mass of war stories being, for a while, so ubiquitous and so public as to crowd out the dissenters and the distraught. But the praise song of the 'greatest generation' would gradually turn into a funeral dirge as the meaning of World War II shifted away from grand campaigns and soldierly accomplishment and became transfixed and immobilised in the face of the Final Solution. Unable to look this gorgon in the eye, writers and artists snatched glimpses of it through increasingly opaque stylistic gymnastics, a project that is ongoing to this day; and part of their endeavours, or perhaps a necessary accompaniment, was an increased sense of the 'irrelevance' of the Pacific, as region, war zone, or narrative locale. Though the razing and pillaging of majestic East Asian cities, the abuse of prisoners of war, and the 'disappearance' of whole armies after Russia's entry in August 1945 were all part of the human catastrophe that was World War II, the Pacific War assumed a position of deference when compared to the European conflict. One effect of this hierarchy, in social terms, was felt by Japanese Americans. Among those who had experienced internment, those who worked up enough courage to speak of their hardships sometimes observed that events in Europe left them few grounds to launch any legitimate complaint. The 'presence' of the Nazi Holocaust, in discursive terms, served to silence Japanese Americans in ways not too distant from Herman Wouk's silencing of his own characters. It goes without saying, too, that no narrative of the European campaigns has ever reconsidered itself in the light of, say, the Burma-Siam Railway or the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Wouk's narrative self-immolation could have found an echo in those writers describing a world war that ended in the annihilation of thousands beneath atomic

mushroom clouds, and yet there was no echo, and the literature of the Pacific War has played second fiddle to the European-based novels ever since.<sup>31</sup>

The reader will be unsurprised to learn that I intend to contest this subordination as much as possible, though I admit that the legacy of scholarly attention to the European arena has provided us an intellectual legacy, particularly of a critical or philosophical nature, which is too significant to disregard (nor would I wish to; and I oppose any attempt to ‘dethrone’ the European arena from its rightful place at the centre of literary and philosophical studies of World War II – but we do need to get away from visualising a single throne). In my chapters on imprisonment and internment, for example, I have borrowed unashamedly from trauma theory, the roots of which are grounded within studies of the Nazi Holocaust. Perhaps this critical dependency ultimately means that my study has reinvested in the very subordination I hope to undo. If so, I hope that my emphasis upon particular episodes within the Pacific War will convince the reader that an equivalent range of critical-philosophical models in the humanistic tradition could have sprung from this arena had Anglophone peoples been less disposed to regard the Japanese as somehow less worthy opponents, culturally speaking, than the Germans. This question of ‘difference’ returns us to the issue of ideologies – how they act to constrict the creative process that literary writers take to their topics, *and* the reader’s willingness to sanction the same range of critical perspectives that s/he would take to literatures of the European theatre (I view the subordination of the Pacific War as a topic, and the Japanese as opponents, as

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31 The same observation could be made concerning the memorialisation of atrocities in the United States. On this matter, the historian Richard H. Minear has alerted American scholars to the peculiarity of having a Holocaust Memorial Museum at the Mall in Washington DC, but not an ‘Atomic Holocaust Museum.’ As Minear puts it, “We need to study the atomic holocaust not in the holier-than-thou sense of proclaiming what we are not, of defining ourselves by contrast with evildoers elsewhere, but in the straightforward sense of learning what we are, of defining ourselves in terms of our own acts. We need to hear the voices of the victims. We need a museum to the atomic holocaust.” See Richard H. Minear, “Atomic Holocaust, Nazi Holocaust: Some Reflections,” in *Learning to Glow: A Nuclear Reader*, ed. John Bradley (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), p. 281.

interrelated, mutually reinforcing discourses). Ideologies, in short, lead to narrow-mindedness, and in the chapters that follow we shall address the ways in which particular literary representations of the Pacific War appear to open a window on certain situations, peoples, and mentalities, sustaining our attention through a variety of narrative ploys, while simultaneously amputating our awareness of congruent episodes that really ought to be examined side-by-side. Combat narratives, for example, had little time for the stories of prisoners-of-war. Prisoners were not part of the 'main' picture of island fighting, and could even constitute an embarrassment. Prisoner-of-war narratives, fighting for their side of the story, had little to say about Hiroshima, except in terms of relief and approval. The enemy had had it coming to them for a while. For their part, Japanese/minority internment narratives sought to draw attention to their own particular experiences behind the stockade, but said nothing about the camps on the other side of the Pacific. These were just soldier camps and had no bearing on the 'main' story: the political battlefield of American civil rights.

Over the course of my readings I have been repeatedly taken aback by the aforementioned phenomenon – that is, by the ways in which creative writers fall in love with, or otherwise act as advocates of, specific peoples – who are associated with specific episodes – of the Pacific War at the expense of providing any sense of the multifaceted discourses at variance with or complicating their own point of view. The purpose of a good many Pacific War writers, it seems to me, is not just to provide insight into their own subjectivity, but to *take us away* from contrarian narratives. Indeed, if there is a 'signature' feature of Pacific War literature that distinguishes it from writings on wars in other times and places, it lies in the ways that creative writers of every tradition fall into (or bait) this trap. The rule is not fixed, but it appears to hold true more often than not, and we see it

most of all in American literature, which has a recurrent tendency to ignore the contribution of other allied nations to the war effort – surely the best evidence of narrative obfuscation practiced on a larger scale, if one discounts the (sometimes wilful) ignorance of the Japanese point of view.<sup>32</sup> The ways in which American cultural productions overlook the role of other allied nationalities do not, however, prevent Anglophone literatures elsewhere from looking to the United States for their ideas. More ironically still, these ‘other’ Anglophone literatures then proceed to engage in the same cancelling-out process as modelled by the American sources! In other words, and to restate my general thesis, New Zealand literature is neither remedial nor exceptional, but tends rather to acknowledge its position as coproducer of a picture prescribed by a larger power. My own shorthand for this phenomenon is that of an ‘ideological coproduction,’ a term I use to refer to the practice of small countries taking as assumed the historical and / or cultural dominance of a larger power, and then producing works that leave the latter’s primacy uncontested while writing local narratives alongside. The coproduction does not infiltrate everyday social life as a survival strategy, rather it is channelled specifically toward the description of peoples or events located outside most people’s frame of knowledge – in this case, descriptions of the Japanese and the Pacific War. Parochialism is an inevitable result, but not the only one, for these are not scaled-down carbon copies of other people’s cultural territory. Instead, they are concave depictions, finely, almost painfully carved to allow a larger story ‘first say,’ and therefore implicitly accommodating even as they invest attention into local details. The value of investigating the coproduction involves seeing what picture emerges when the concave and the convex are placed together. For this reason, I have tried as much as

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<sup>32</sup> The World War II veteran and writer, Edward W. Wood Jr., lists the mistaken idea that Americans won the war on their own as the third among four pervasive American ‘myths’ that his book, *Worshipping the Myths of World War II* (2006), seeks to debunk (he himself draws particular attention to the role of the Soviet Union in the defeat of Nazi Germany, and might have given a passing word or two to Australia and New Zealand’s role in the Pacific War in addition).

possible to match a single American and a single New Zealand novel in every chapter, except where sources do not allow (as in Chapter 2, where I default to short stories for the New Zealand side; or Chapter 5, where the sheer vastness of the topic meant that no one text could be taken as representative).<sup>33</sup> Within the durability of the coproduction, we see how stereotypes and assumptions about the enemy, as well as of one's own side, are passed from one generation of writers to the next, perhaps only ever contested in those writings on Japanese civilian/minority internment. By positioning American and New Zealand texts side-by-side, we can gain a better understanding of how each national culture invests in the same version of a story, albeit in different ways. It only remains for me to summarise the chapters in which I advance my observations.

In Chapter 1, I undertake a comparative reading of Errol Brathwaite's *An Affair of Men* (1961) and James Jones *The Thin Red Line* (1963), each of which is set on a Pacific island. The first thing one notices in these texts is the unfamiliar, enervating effect of the jungle environment upon the human mind, as well as the overtly brutal nature of the fighting that takes place. For the allies, the Japanese comprised an enemy whose rules of warfare differed markedly from what they had been taught to expect of their opponents. The shock of this encounter provides perhaps the most straightforward explanation for why literary scholars have neglected the Pacific War. Combat texts present an unwelcome quagmire to liberal researchers who have traditionally identified within Anglophone

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33 The disparity between the impact of New Zealand's literary productions, which seldom appear in foreign markets, and the ubiquitous offerings of the United States, deserves mention. Several of the American authors I examine will be familiar to scholars in New Zealand, but the reverse is unlikely to hold true, and will no doubt leave most American scholars feeling somewhat adrift. To check disorientation, I have endeavoured to properly contextualise both my sources and their attendant narratives, though I anticipate – and this is where the comparative model ought to appeal to readers on both sides of the Pacific – that the 'types' of New Zealand material will be familiar to everyone, even when the authors are not. In large part, this sense of familiarity is buttressed by the process of elimination that a comparative method necessarily entails. Most obviously, there are several stories on the American side – those that take place at sea, for example, or involving code-breaking – that have no equivalent in New Zealand, and thus I have not included them. Conversely, there are episodes in New Zealand literature – such as the shooting of Japanese prisoners at Featherston – that likewise have no equivalent in the United States. The result of this paring / pairing process will, I hope, make my thesis accessible to readers even when they are not familiar with the primary sources.

literature on the Far East a people imagined more or less on the terms of the writer. As I have stated in my reference to the gold rushes, there can be little doubt that a cultural genealogy depicting an 'Asiatic opponent' was brought to bear during the Pacific War and after, and that this fed into the violence perpetrated by American soldiers especially. However, when one examines isolated cases of atrocities on the battlefield, 'fictional' or otherwise, it becomes equally plain that these are also products of the battlefield. The almost anesthetised manner in which American soldiers execute prisoners is a practice that Jones describes with such matter-of-factness that, far from ascribing probable cause, the Orientalist imaginary (and Orientalist criticism) reads like a cheap intrusion. The tried and tested paradigm of tracing cultural depictions back to a source located in an artist's prejudicial whimsy therefore cannot pass muster here, for the enemy's fanaticism (and American retaliation) was no product of Orientalist daydreaming. The question that I ask in my readings of these two novels is how one can approach texts that depict an exceptional, 'out of bounds' revelatory experience within a war that deployed a totalising rhetoric toward the enemy. Brathwaite's novel provides a handy intervention here, since he is principally concerned with depicting the Japanese at war, or more specifically one Imperial Marine who, stranded in the primeval jungle of Bougainville, confronts his own 'heart of darkness' and is ultimately consumed by it. In this character we perceive many of the constituent parts that made up the preferred portrait of the enemy character and, indeed, a good many aspects that were borne out by Japanese actions. Situating these two texts side-by-side, we see that the truth value of the depictions, taken individually, is hardly as significant as the way they each anticipate the other and act in concert. This is not to say that Jones and Brathwaite were aware of one another as writers, but more that they each wrote one half of a story that they knew, without ever needing to state it up front, would

reach completion through another source. The emergent coproduction allows for a revelatory experience for the allies – indeed, is dependent on it – but incorporates this within a framework that closed off investigations of the enemy consciousness except at the formulaic level. Readers of the combat novel, already familiar with propagandised notions of the fanatical enemy and the valorous allied soldier, found reinstated versions of the old binary within novels that took a close-up view of the respective combatants. In the mid-twentieth century, therefore, we need to avoid picturing the Pacific theatre as a hidden trove of themes and issues accessible only to the most intrepid writers. Rather, those authors who rose to prominence did so by reassuring readers that public assumptions were largely correct, and that there was no need to draw the curtain on an enemy and a conflict whose nature(s) remained far less familiar than those of Europe.

The combat novel of the early 1960's recalled the war in ways that reinforced notions of self and other, a process that wrote the Japanese enemy as an unyielding, impetuous automaton, so far removed from the idiosyncratic, improvisational allied soldier as to seem a different species. On the battlefield, national characteristics had a habit of whittling down to bare essentials, and the geographic confinement, not to mention the dogged persistence of combatants on both sides, made this a swift and vicious process. But while war was the fulcrum that made all things visible, at the time of publication readers understood that combat narratives were retrospective and that Cold War expediencies would not stand still for old saws, no matter how convincing. Beyond the combat novel, therefore, the wreckage of wartime motifs quietly circulated, but in a more compliant, less pugnacious form that fitted into the Cold War context of retaining allies in the Far East. We see this change most obviously in the depiction of 'salarymen' in American culture. Whereas the bucktoothed, bespectacled figure of the Japanese man abroad had evoked fear

in the early 1940's, at the height of the Cold War he became a quirky, peaceful, sometimes humorous, more often uncomprehending background entity, less interested in backstabbing than in photographing. Truman Capote's character, Mr. Yunioshi, from *Breakfast At Tiffany's* (1958), exemplifies the type. He is a man whom Holly Golightly just happens to run into now and again, being in Manhattan for reasons never revealed in his pidgin-English jibber-jabber. We expect nothing of him, and yet he remains in the wings, not-so-quietly biding his time until he morphs into the smooth-tongued, white-collared spendthrift businessman of the 1980's and early 1990's. In Chapter 2, we shall observe how the old binaries of wartime 'survived through' international events – that is, how they lay dormant through the Cold War, depending upon socio-political conflicts for their 'currency' – and coalesced in the American business thriller, which, one might say, is where Mr. Yunioshi begins wielding his chequebook like a samurai sword. The simile is not entirely fanciful either, for in this period the tropes of the Pacific War got a new lease of life, seeming only to shift planes into the world of business instead of military ventures. Examining the literature, we find not so much a new take on the war itself as an afterimage of the combat novel, and thus this chapter is conceived as a companion piece to the prior study, underwriting the notion of war as a series of ideological investments difficult to foreclose. Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* (1992) made no effort to assuage people's fears in this regard: Japanese business corporations were sapping the economic vitality of the United States, growing fat on the demise of domestic American industries. They were also the harbingers of more sinister developments, such as the rise of the corporate surveillance apparatus, a hollowed-out, powerless legal system, and ultimately the death of the American dream. Structured as something between a public opinion poll and a rhetorical call-to-arms, Crichton's novel pointed an unwavering, accusatory finger straight at Japanese business practices, which had



the effrontery to do unto Americans as Americans ought to be doing to them. Across the Pacific, New Zealand fiction writers could not replicate the model, for there was barely enough hi-tech industry located in that country to sustain such a scenario. Rather than a corporate thriller, therefore, writers paid close attention to the Japanese tourist, whose group behaviour left them especially vulnerable to caricature. As one tourist researcher has observed, "Mass tourists are frequently treated as a homogeneous mass, who are often metaphorically described like animals as hordes, herds or flocks, making them sound almost like a separate species."<sup>34</sup> The obvious overlap with wartime portrayals of the Japanese soldier served to facilitate the reintroduction of tropes and motifs last seen four decades ago. Two short stories, Keri Hulme's "Kaibutsu-San" (1985) and Vivienne Plumb's "The Wife Who Spoke Japanese in her Sleep" (1993) illustrate the process and comprise what I term 'gothic possessions,' by which I mean, firstly, that these are stories that imagine a literal possession of a human body by an evil spirit or monster, and, secondly, that they are tangible examples of an ideological 'possession' of and by New Zealand insofar as the stories indicate a pervasive flirtation with the idea of invasion narratives.

Dwelling morbidly upon the corporate swashbuckling of Japan offered one way for writers in the late twentieth century to 'refight' the war without falling back on the combat narrative, though the memories and 'lessons' of combat were ever present in the background. In this schema, tourists and businessmen called to mind the foot soldiers of imperial Japan, admittedly a leap in reasoning, though the vitriolic rhetoric of the day meant that analogous and polemical images tended to displace reasoned argument altogether. While Japanese purchasing power was in the ascendant the literature commanded attention,

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<sup>34</sup> Mike Crang, "Travel/Tourism," in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* ed. David Atkinson, et al., International Library of Human Geography (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p. 39.

but following the collapse of the 'bubble economy' reactionary cultural forms in the Anglophone world quietly faded into obscurity. Thereafter, contemporary events provided no consistent opportunities to reinstate the combat narrative, and Pacific War literature turned instead toward a close examination of individual characters set against the background of group experience rather than attempting to represent the group through a range of characters. Those that emerge in the next three chapters are thus defined not so much by what they are as what they once were: prisoners-of-war; ethnic minority internees; and atomic bomb survivors and creators. Irrespective of the precise details of the individual's history, these writings all seek to collapse the distinction between past and present, thereby shifting the site of contention away from contemporary international relations and refocusing attention onto a particular wartime experience. In the United States, a well-trodden literary history meant that authors got the benefit of prior publications and could reach for successive qualitative improvements, though they could often prove as fallible as their predecessors when describing less praiseworthy moments of national history. In Chapter 3, I explore a literary subject that, as an exception to the rule, remained hitherto peculiarly unexplored in American and New Zealand fiction: the prisoner-of-war experience under the Japanese. American combat narratives sometimes gave passing consideration to the mistreatment of allied prisoners, but only as a spur to combat, and seldom as a subject in its own right. Classic British fictional accounts were adapted for the screen and thereby stood in for the American story, the same holding true in New Zealand, where cultural affiliations with Britain meant that distinctively 'New Zealand' stories remained low on the literary agenda for a good many years. The result is two texts that both seek to distance themselves from a British literary model, but by entirely different routes. In Jim Lehrer's *The Special Prisoner* (2000), a former prisoner and public

personality tries to reconcile his pacifism and Christian charity with an unrepentant and openly antagonistic former captor, whom he encounters quite by chance and traps in a hotel room. The debate between these characters runs the gamut of reasons for moral one-upmanship, from accusations of sexual perversion to atomic-powered genocide. Though Lehrer provides a cursory narrative of the prisoner experience, he is less concerned with painting a convincing portrait of captivity under the Japanese than the excuse that this provides for objectifying them as the original guilty party. In this respect, Lehrer is none too different from Crichton in his obvious partisanship, though contentions do arise when his characters pick over the details of the war years. The New Zealand novel, Peter Wells' *Lucky Bastard* (2007), avoids the narrative of imprisonment altogether, preferring the more delimited account of two Auckland-based siblings working through the meaning of how their father's wartime experiences impacted upon them. Wells' project emerges from a growing enthusiasm in New Zealand for oral history publications that focus sharply upon individual stories rather than the grand narrative of national endeavour. But decentring the knowledge landscape away from national history does not result in a coherent reconfiguration so much as the impossibility of absolute knowledge, and brings with it a troubled sense of self-worth for the trauma survivor. Though Wells is inarguably more astute in his assessment of how trauma can cross time and generational boundaries, he and Lehrer both hold out the possibility of a 'true' and 'original' point of Japanese guilt in the closing moments of their novels.

Prisoner-of-war stories have proven their capacity to move away from the polarity of stalwart allied patriots downtrodden by a needlessly violent foe, but only through a temporal distance that essentially sidesteps or counterbalances the imprisonment narrative in favour of present-day historical debate. Putting this in more simple terms, it amounts to

studied neglect, as Lehrer and Wells must have sensed when they penned their works, judging by the ways in which the most egregious examples of Japanese wartime behaviour toward their prisoners prove impossible to wholly subsume. Try as they might, these authors find Japanese atrocities incomparable, and thus their novels belong to a body of literature that again points the finger of moral condemnation toward the enemy rather more than the allies, and we therefore need to pay close attention to the discourses that paint the Japanese as victims, such as narratives of Japanese/minority internment, which is the subject of Chapter 4. If prisoner-of-war narratives allowed little enough space for Japanese stories of victimhood, Japanese American internment narratives have likewise preferred a one-sided tale of social, legal, and economic disenfranchisement abetted by politically-endorsed racial prejudice. Granting these narratives the validity of their moral convictions, such stories still act to close off comparative viewpoints drawn from the other side of the Pacific. In this chapter, we shall examine two recent novels that attempt to introduce a comparative component alongside the story of the Japanese/minority. David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1994) and Wendy Catran's *The Swap* (2004) both go beyond the framework of the Japanese American internment novel, portraying the articulate silence of the former internee and the disarticulated silence of the veteran soldier as engaged in a struggle to determine the principal (unspoken) topic. Considerably less didactic than the prisoner-of-war novel, these stories are interested in characters and situations whose reticence belies the urgency of their subjective experiences. In Guterson's case, the combat veteran discovers key evidence necessary for the vindication of a Japanese American fisherman falsely accused of murder. But a cut and dried case for doing one's civic duty becomes complicated by the veteran's leftover bitterness toward Japanese minorities and Japanese nationals. Catran engages with similar antipathies in her story of a Korean

War veteran whose Japanese war bride causes a rift to emerge in the Kiwi household, owing to memories of the prisoner-of-war experience. But the war bride herself carries a 'lost' story of Japanese civilian internment within New Zealand, a perspective made more powerful because it is so little known. Both novelists seek to find ways of putting several wartime experiences in conversation in order to break out of the habit of mistaking a single experience for an entirety. The result is a delicately poised impasse that reaches not so much for resolution as the realisation of each side's respective positions. Of all the writings on the Pacific War, therefore, these have gone furthest in taking the measure of anti-Japanese and antinationalistic perspectives, and yet both novelists also hold out the possibility of passing the blame onto others for the internment of Japanese/civilians.

Finally, most studies having anything to do with the Pacific War must engage at some level with Hiroshima, but in Chapter 5 we shall be less concerned with Hiroshima as an event than with its place – or rather, its displacement – in literary science fictions. The premise is simple, but controversial: in the immediate aftermath of the war's end, the meanings that Americans attached to Hiroshima were varied and fast-changing, and quickly transitioned from fascination with the technology of nuclear weaponry to an anxiety that would last well into the 1960's. Looking back, Americans saw less the demise of their enemy than the vision of their own prospective victimhood in a nuclear war. Apocalyptic science fictions picked up on this, feeding into a culture of hysteria that imagined nuclear attack as imminent; but another way to approach the prospect of nuclear war emerged as well, one that sought nostalgic refuge within depictions of that brief moment in which the United States alone became the first nuclear power. Manhattan Project novels provided the best example of this type of science fiction, their ostensible objective being to reveal (and revel in) a bygone community that worked for the good of the country. Such fictions never

allowed – in fact, stood directly in the way of – a place for Hiroshima in American culture, preferring to locate victimisation within the conscience of the scientist, which becomes the principal object of interest and only secondarily a means to cast doubt on the morality of the Project itself. In New Zealand, a literary and political cordon also existed to contain the meaning of Hiroshima and divert attention elsewhere, though it took on a form diametrically opposed to the celebratory tone of Project novels. Not long after World War II, literary science fictions began to put forward the idea of New Zealand becoming a last refuge for human life in the aftermath of a nuclear war. The country's marginal geographical location, its fiercely self-satisfied pride in high living standards and civil rights, and its role as a major exporter of agricultural produce ticked all the right boxes so far as these authors were concerned. Though the idea took a while to catch on in New Zealand itself, in the 1980's the government's nuclear-free policy appeared to advance the country toward this position, and public debate began to address what actions should follow in the event of human life becoming untenable elsewhere. When the Cold War ended a few years later, the nuclear-free stance was maintained and the country also saw its first literary novel to engage the topic of the nuclear bombings, James George's *Ocean Roads* (2006). In George's novel, we see a literary topic emerge as if from nowhere, and the author is aware that he writes into a voided memory, too long imprinted with the image of a nuclear-free destiny and barely aware of the destiny that was taken to the Japanese in 1945. In their different ways, American and New Zealand science fictions have both contrived to avoid the subject of Hiroshima, and in this they practice the sacrificial logic that we shall see at work in the literature of Chapter 1. It is hardly a big step between refusing to see in one's enemy a shared humanity and then refusing to confront the suffering inflicted upon him in defeat.

As in all preceding chapters, the routes that American and New Zealand literature take are quite distinct, but the result is the same in this respect.

## Chapter 1

### Sacrificing the Subject

All he could do was try to stay alive, try to keep out of enemy hands, try not to go crazy before the indefinite day of rescue. He had no sustaining philosophy upon which to retreat and wait. All he had were daylight and darkness, the minatory jungle, the cursed rain, and his animal appetites. And in the bungalow, towards which he now made his way in the tropic, steamy, feverish dusk, was a young woman who, to him, merely happened to be wearing the robes of a nun.

Charles Shaw, *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* (p. 145)

With the onset of war, there is a political imperative to isolate and narrate a principal point of commencement, a casus belli sufficient for the military of both sides to pursue subsequent hostilities with an assurance of just cause. Most often, it is convenient to append the place name of the location in which hostilities unequivocally began to the explanation that follows. Thus Fort Sumter, Wairau, Marco Polo Bridge, and Pearl Harbor all served once, and may still serve, as rhetorical rallying points, evoking a set of images that assume the mantle of a politicised stance. The practice is inherently combative, and turns a blind eye to the interfusion of economic, diplomatic, industrial, military, and cultural contexts that precede hostilities, much of which might otherwise give soldiers and civilians reason to pause, reflect, and retain composure. All this, of course, is entirely expedient when vociferous expressions of patriotism are called for. Short, concise, easily digestible nuggets of information circulate as rapidly and broadly as possible until their simultaneous consumption, taken as assumed, binds the imagined community into a whole. Invariably the purpose is to paint the enemy as aggressors.



Once set in motion, the ideological whirlwind recycles its content so often that the constituent aspects outlast the war itself and refuse, figuratively speaking, to stand down, though they do slow down somewhat. The impressions are indelible, and they make it stultifying to revisit the war years, whether one is writing a book or having a barroom conversation. On every level, the original narrative of national righteousness serves to police the discourse, leaving those who act the part of naysayer feeling as though their words are falling flat. Among the topics that get purposely neglected is the matter of coming to terms not so much with the suffering one endured as that which gets inflicted upon one's enemy – those whom one opposed as a matter of course, but whose ordeal reflected back uncomfortably upon one's better instincts, or lack thereof. During World War I, Sigmund Freud agonised over just this issue, and found that no satisfying explanation was to be had in the patterns of interstate politics. Instead, he turned toward an examination of coarse behaviour in seemingly civilised people for a revised estimate of what to expect of them. The neatness of isolated aggressor-victim narratives did not suffice to explain matters at the individual level, he felt, and, in any case, modern war had revealed itself as altogether too messy to retain the dialectic for long. In his *Reflections on War and Death* (1915), Freud strikes a troubled pose, genuinely unnerved by misdeeds and bloodshed on the front, yet drawing upon this turmoil as prime evidence for the feral nature of the human unconscious. Nurture was relevant, indeed essential, to the cultivation of a well-mannered citizenry and yet steps toward this end could only ever move away from the baser drives, not erase them altogether. Debunking the notion of a moral childhood education producing unwavering decency in adulthood, Freud forced his readers to confront the ever-present possibility of corruption. As he took pains to make clear, this was less a matter of succumbing to outside influence than a reversion to hitherto dormant forces within:

In reality there is no such thing as 'eradicating' evil. Psychological, or strictly speaking, psychoanalytic investigation proves, on the contrary, that the deepest character of man consists of impulses of an elemental kind which are similar in all human beings, the aim of which is the gratification of certain primitive needs. These impulses are in themselves neither

good or evil. We classify them and their manifestations according to their reaction to the needs and demands of the human community.<sup>35</sup>

Finding the source of violence, in psychological terms, and judging its outcomes, as measured in its impact on culture and society, are separate projects, and Freud's universalism where the former is concerned demands a strict accounting for acts committed on both sides of a conflict, since each side shares essentially the same capacities (though not necessarily the same inclinations) for violent behaviour. In this light, stories that show one's own forces as virtuous and those of the enemy as brutish are circumstantial, germane to the needs of recruitment bureaus and biased historians, but scarcely overthrowing the hard-wired equivalence of human nature.

Freud's wartime perspective counselled caution where one-sided accusations were concerned and acted to counterbalance the spiralling emotional fallout from the 'who started it' narratives. By the end of World War II, such distinctions were more pertinent and more necessary than ever, and yet public interest, at least on the allied side, showed little inclination to adopt such even-handedness.<sup>36</sup> In the main, two separate and complementary ideologies came to fruition during the forties and fifties, which kept Americans and New Zealanders from probing too deeply into the darker sides of the allied experience of war. The first took as its topic the task of ascribing stereotypical features to the enemy, and a cursory reading of the fiction of World War I and II reveals a bend in the river where this is concerned. Anglophone Great War writers tended to regard the enemy with respect, but this tone evaporates into blatant disregard or outright distaste in writings of the Second World War, and of the Pacific War more especially.<sup>37</sup> The literary about-turn is no stylistic evolution, rather it manifests the power of the anti-Japanese propaganda casting its

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35 Sigmund Freud, *Reflections on War and Death*, trans. A. A. Brill and Alfred B. Kuttner (New York: Moffat, Yard, and Company, 1918), p. 18.

36 Paul Fussell offers an account of how American and British readers of fiction were so caught up in perceiving the war in morally dichotomised terms that most were scarcely able to distinguish between literary fiction and propaganda. See Paul Fussell, "Writing in Wartime: The Uses of Innocence," in *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays*, ed. Paul Fussell (New York: Summit Books, 1988).

37 Jeffrey Walsh, *American War Literature: 1914 to Vietnam* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), p. 113-4.

long shadow into the postwar years. Although there were some writers, the American journalist John Hersey and the New Zealand short story writer Bill Pearson most notably, who were quick to respond sympathetically to the suffering of former enemies, these were the exceptions in a morally apathetic, even disdainful public.

To be fair, there remained a real sense of unease and uncertainty over how to describe events that contained suffering of a type or on a scale with which few Americans or New Zealanders could readily identify. But the affective response could likewise mask prejudicial indifference. On this matter, Elaine Scarry reminds us that hesitancy over the tricky matter of describing bodily pain and injury, inseparably bound to topics that concern them, may inadvertently sustain a discursive space in which misrepresentation, deliberate or otherwise, becomes possible.<sup>38</sup> Although there is no evidence to suggest any link between the compunction of writers who faced the daunting task of depicting pain in ways that transcend or otherwise confront the limitations of language, on the one hand, and the persistence of prejudicial sentiments toward the Japanese, on the other, it is interesting to note that those American writers who did break ground in this area – Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut and Thomas Pynchon most obviously – all set their stories in the European conflict.

The second cause of inattention to the misdeeds of one's own side is traceable to the subjugation of Freud's theories to the postwar revolution in corporate marketing, which fostered a society in which the basic human urges, at once frightening but apparently responsive to veiled prompts, were channelled toward and gratified by consumption. It would be wrong to assume that any part of this process specifically aimed to cover up the unpleasantness of the global conflict preceding and fuelling it. But given that the maintenance of consumer culture demanded an indefatigable forward-looking mindset, one side-effect was precisely that, and conscientious observers of the day could hardly fail to feel troubled at the prevalent indifference. Among them,

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<sup>38</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 13.

the American philosopher J. Glenn Gray attempted to reintroduce war, and the soldier's place within it, as a paramount area of public discussion:

The discontinuities in contemporary life are cutting us off from our roots and threatening us with the dread evil of nihilism in the twentieth century. We may become refugees in an inner sense unless we remember to some purpose. Surely the menace of new and more frightful wars is not entirely unrelated to our failure to understand those recently fought.<sup>39</sup>

As one would expect, by the end of the fifties there had been many salutary attempts in the Anglophone literary world to explore, if not exactly explain, the ramifications of the Second World War in human terms. Nonetheless, most of these fell short of the mark when it came to exposing and mulling over the violent excesses in which the allies participated, and this syndrome held true especially for those works that took the Pacific as their site of interest.

In this chapter, I do not propose to illustrate how authors reconsidered the twin confines of anti-Japanese sentiments and the seductive charms of postwar prosperity, for this did not, in fact, take place until the latter decades of the twentieth-century. The aim here is to show how mid-twentieth century efforts remained complicit, constructing plausible, detailed, evocative, and engaging narratives that, while challenging readers in some respects, readily fell into conventional modes of depiction that moved toward closure rather than controversy. In the early sixties, two writers demonstrated precisely this mixture of narrative quality and persistent regard for reader expectations. The first of these, Errol Brathwaite, was one of the few New Zealanders whose military service had not taken him to Europe. Enlisting in the Army in 1942, he subsequently transferred to the Air Force, which then sent him to New Britain, just off the coast of Papua New Guinea. His first novel, *Fear in the Night* (1959), followed the plight of a downed aircrew evading a search party of Japanese sent after them in the jungle. Though not explicitly stated, his next work,

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39 J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, [1959] 1998), p. 24.

*An Affair of Men* (1961), entailed an identical scenario, but seen from the opposite side, the Japanese. Publication of the story coincided with the centenary of the *Otago Daily Times*, which held a literary competition and awarded the prize to Brathwaite's novel. A year later, James Jones published *The Thin Red Line* (1962), likewise a sequel of sorts, but just as capable of standing alone. Jones' military career had also involved a change in duties, his initial intention being to fly planes in the Army Air Corps. He transferred to the infantry in 1940 and served in the Guadalcanal Campaign, an experience that formed the basis of his novel, easily among the best of its kind at describing island combat.

Brathwaite and Jones are convenient for comparison in that both set their novels in island combat zones (Bougainville and Guadalcanal, respectively) and both are concerned with servicemen and their travails far away from home. This was not always the case. Other novels had examined camp training, with the growing (or searing) pains of adjustment to military life; the social, moral, and physical ordeals of the conscientious objector; or the demands of highly specialised work in fields of espionage, code-breaking, sabotage, and industrial production. All these, and umpteen categorical variants besides, illustrate that the shaft of an arrow is no less important than the sharpened head. While time proves the metaphor and more especially as war becomes the project of historians, in wartime practice the public eye aims squarely down toward the penetrative arrowhead, proffered as an object of attention in newspaper headlines, public radio broadcasts, recruitment drives, and, consistent in the forties, cinema newsreels. How people remember a war depends on many contingencies, so many that all but the most banal generalisations become invalid, but in conventional warfare the experiences of combat troops invariably figure at some point, even if belatedly or with misgivings as to conduct and justification. Part of this reflex may follow on the efforts of returned servicemen who make the matter of public remembrance a personal crusade. Brathwaite and Jones both fall into this category.

While these novels are part of the subgenre known as combat fiction, the similarities end there. Jones' is a panegyric to the mass of men who struggled through Pacific campaigns at great cost to life and limb, and much of the writing is at pains to communicate the scale of this endeavour without treating individual combatants as checkerboard pieces. Fight sequences occupy the bulk of *The Thin Red Line*, sandwiched between a contemplative prelude and a desensitised residuum, during which time Jones provides us with a rough and ready catalogue of ships, a dramatis personæ of colourful characters who command distinctive treatment case-by-case. By contrast, Brathwaite's story focuses upon a sole Japanese officer hacking through the jungle, terrorising and terrorised as he goes, but who is largely confined to a single village where he and the headman debate human nature and the necessity of war. Structurally, this portrait contained unbounded potential to reintroduce an enemy whose strength came close to reaching New Zealand a mere twenty years previously. In this respect, isolation accomplishes for the Japanese what combat does for the Americans of Jones' work – that is, it positions a subject in an experience of extremity sufficient to facilitate self-discovery. But, as we shall see, whereas the Americans undergo successive revelations, the Japanese remains intractable. This distinction suggests that, in many ways, Brathwaite and Jones mirror one another in their objectives, for the further the American soldiers proceed in their combat revelations, the less the Japanese are presumed to know; while the little progress the Japanese officer makes in isolation buttresses our assumption that the allies have done better. Though these two novels occupy different national literatures, I therefore argue that they are but different manifestations of the same response to the Pacific War, one that closed off any debate over who or what the Japanese were in favour of age-old staples of self-aggrandizement. In pursuit of their ends, they sacrificed an otherwise worthy subject.

### **The Reluctant Beachcomber**

Initial forays into Brathwaite's novel may not reveal anything quite as lofty as self-aggrandizement. In fact, they may not reveal anything particular to the reader at all, since the story concerns only two characters, the Japanese captain Itoh, and the native doctor, Sedu, the former being more important overall. But if the plot seems unreasonably sparing in characters, especially for a novel set in a time of mass demographic movement, this is to privilege our sense of the historical over the literary genre out of which Brathwaite operates. His chosen form took character isolation, or assimilation / entrapment within in a larger native community, as its signature feature. Nowhere do we get the beach landings, *banzai* charges, artillery barrages, and *nambu* machine gunning that feature in so many accounts of Pacific Island combat. This is an altogether quieter novel, and the omissions force us to recognise that, from the very beginning and, in fact, during the war itself, there was no universally recognised literary form set aside as singularly appropriate to the conflict. As with any war, writers had to experiment with past forms even as they invented new ones. But the Pacific War was unique in that its participants, at least on the allied side, quickly realised that war writing was not the only resource available for their purpose.

In many respects, the war inaugurated a new era in literary ventures that followed on the heels of those soldiers who, perhaps venturing abroad for the first time, had no real idea what to expect. While there can be little doubt that many, perhaps most of these men, viewed the Pacific islands in much the same way that strategists did – that is, as stepping stones along the way to a larger end – the encounter proved instructive in its own right. In a selective history of geographical knowledge-gathering, Denis Cosgrove notes how the allied war effort was the harbinger of improved information resources:

The succeeding war produced a new Pacific spatiality, directly experienced by thousands of American troops engaged in combat across the ocean, and represented to their families and compatriots at home in a national effort of self-education in hemispheric geography. This

effort generated original cartographic initiatives within American school geographies, to be sure, but it extended much further: into new journals, popular magazines and newspapers.<sup>40</sup>

And novels. Or, more to the point, one particular American novel: James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific* (1947), which, while hardly holding forth in cartographic terms, resulted in so many multimedia spin-offs that it almost convinced its enthusiasts that the war had been only minimally unpleasant.<sup>41</sup> Michener owed his success to an uncharacteristic concurrence between the United States Navy's need for an historian and the wanderlust of the enlisted man. But if the situations he encountered proved inspirational, no less so were the motley assortment of notions he already had in common with his fellow servicemen, a good number of which were 'far-fetched' indeed and embarrassing recipes for disappointment in those who sought them.<sup>42</sup> Tracing these clichés to the first European explorations, Judith A. Bennett reminds us just how pervasive and commanding they were:

For most of the Pacific War, the battleground was unfamiliar. Unfamiliarity left spaces for speculation. Beginning with the eighteenth-century European explorers' accounts of 'discovery' of the Pacific Islands, an exogeneous parade of commercial, evangelical, and intellectual entrepreneurs peddled their versions of islanders, causes, and schemes, whether as critiques of their own societies or for investment, conversion, and colonization. Because of

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40 Denis Cosgrove, *Geography & Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World*, International Library of Human Geography (London: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2008), p. 196.

41 Philip D. Beidler, "South Pacific and American Remembering; or, 'Josh, We're Going to Buy This Son of a Bitch!'," *Journal of American Studies* 27, no. 2 (1993): p. 209. To this day, Michener's depiction of war in the South Pacific remains influential, and not just in the United States either. In a survey of chroniclers, artists, and writers who take the Pacific as their topic or locale, for example, Auckland-based writer Graeme Lay gives pride of place to Michener (alongside a couple of official New Zealand war paintings) in his chapter on 'War in the South Pacific.' See Graeme Lay, *In search of Paradise: Artists and Writers in the Colonial South Pacific* (Auckland: Godwit, 2008), p. 240-7.

42 Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon, "Searching for Dorothy Lamour: War and Sex in the South Pacific, 1941-45," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 18, no. 1 (1999).



such selective representations, to many outsiders these faraway islands had become a hotbed for their dreams, fantasies, and fears.<sup>43</sup>

Thus it may be more accurate to say that, rather than a new literary era, an old one was given a new lease of life, and the end result was the type of novel in which the exotic could blend in with the mechanical in startling ways.<sup>44</sup> There was never any doubt that the war had involved brutal fighting, but unlike Europe, where the beaches of Normandy gave forth to a land that contained all the infrastructure of Western industry and which, more to the point, had an undoubted legacy of defining its own subjectivity, the beaches of the South Sea Islands gave way to places that had been imagined wholly on the terms of literate foreigners. In a very real sense, therefore, the Pacific War (as it took place on islands, at least) involved two worlds: the 'real' one of life and death struggle, and the imagined world of the exotic, and when we recall Joanna Bourke's crucial observation that much writing on war avoids the topic of killing, it is easy to see how attractive the exotic was as a means for writers to take their characters out of war altogether and into a safe haven.<sup>45</sup> In Europe, where physical space was comparatively abundant, the same might have happened, but no wholly pre-constructed realm existed into which characters might flee. In the Pacific, the reverse held true, testimony to the power of that imaginary to overcome spatial boundaries. In sum, the exotic represents a literary exit strategy, away from combat and the world of the ultra-masculine, and into the refuge of solitary contemplation traceable to Robinson Crusoe.<sup>46</sup> Just how far this literary form might go may be surmised from the epigraph to this chapter, taken from Charles Shaw's *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* (1952), in which a Marine washes ashore on an unknown island. There he takes

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43 Judith A. Bennett, *Natives and Exotics: World War II and Environment in the Southern Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), p. 11.

44 This blending of the exotic and the mechanical is just as recurrent in films of the Pacific War. For a cursory overview of this aspect, see Greg Jericho, "War in the Tropics," *etropic: electronic journal of studies in the tropics* 4(2005).

45 Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Granta Books, 1999), p. 2.

46 Of course, Robinson Crusoe was not the only mythic forerunner to the literary exoticisms of the Pacific War. Between the two were a host of materials published by those Americans and Europeans who 'crossed the beach' and lived to tell of it. For a guided tour of the personalities, experiences, and stories that emerged, see Susanne Williams Milcaims, *Native Strangers: Beachcombers, Renegades & Castaways in the South Seas* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2006).

up residence with a nun, even while trying to evade capture by a bevy of Japanese who, being at least half female, spend much of their time bathing nude in streams. With religion and war as impassable barriers, the only thing left is voyeuristic chagrin.

Most literature of this type is American, something that says more about patterns of military deployment than the temptations of American imagination. It was a trend rather than the rule, and not an exclusive trend at that, as New Zealand proved.<sup>47</sup> While avoiding the sexually frustrated excesses of Shaw's work, Brathwaite's novel fits squarely into the same category and, in fact, is equally gratuitous when it comes to depictions of violence, this being captain Itoh's forte. Numbingly predictable as he is, one cannot but wonder what accounted for the novel's appeal at the time of publication, a question that is quickly answered if we turn to the single most telling absence in the story: that of an Australasian, American, or European subject. Given that the Pacific had a long-established history of interactions between these peoples and the native inhabitants, the absence must have elicited an otherworldly fascination at the time, all the more so given the trends in post-war decolonisation. Itoh's relationship with Sedu captures the anxiety over what sort of influences would come into play in a Pacific gradually getting used to the idea that white people were not an inseparable fixture. Against this context, Itoh's ultra-colonial mentality emerges as the shadowy afterglow of a waning, backpedalling colonial spirit in the Anglophone world, one that sought to extricate itself from the memory of less savoury historical moments by singling out the thwarted menace of a Japan-dominated Pacific ('we made mistakes, but we prevented a more egregious form of imperial governance'). Filtered through or in league with the familiar icon of the quixotic, pedantic enemy soldier, much overused in Anglo-American comedy acts then and since,

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47 Another New Zealand novel that bears structural and stylistic similarities to Shaw's work is Olaf Ruhen's *Scan The Dark Coast* (1969), in which a solitary coast watcher in the Solomon Islands becomes the unwitting guardian of a white female refugee fleeing southward. Once again, the Japanese hardly feature in the novel except at a distance, the main tension being sexual, as the following passage reveals: "The earth beneath the groundsheet seemed inimical to sleep, the atmosphere too moistly heavy; but in all honesty he knew that the enemy was the presence of the woman in the hut across the dark clearing. She was so flamboyantly female; and remembered glimpses of her disturbed the quiescent male in him, that alter ego, not quite understood, not quite accepted, not ever to be rejected, that usurped his veins and his muscles and shuttered his reasoned vision at times that were seldom so inconvenient as this." See Olaf Ruhen, *Scan The Dark Coast* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), p. 122.

Itoh is the mirror onto which New Zealanders could safely project their discomfiture with old-fashioned ways. In tandem, and in just the same way, his absolutist doctrine of total war handily serves the purpose of reassuring readers that rolling back the Japanese empire served a greater good, no matter the means and comparable brutality involved. Seen this way, Itoh is a sacrifice, offered up to appease the wartime and colonial consciences, or, with little difference, to anticipate and stymie such sentiments before they emerge, and one can read Brathwaite's novel largely as a character study with this sole purpose in mind.

To achieve his sacrificial purpose, textually speaking, Itoh cannot simply represent himself; he must equate to the Japanese standard, and the novel takes steps to establish this from the outset. The novel opens with Itoh leading his party through the jungle in search of the allied airmen whilst silently contemplating the strangeness of his situation in ways that come close to novelistic self-reflexivity:

It was a peculiar thing, Captain Itoh thought, that modern war was so vast in scope, so immense in conception, so wide-spread in operational area, yet so closely personal; whereas yesterday's wars were small, concentrated and furious, with every soldier continually conscious of being a very small cog in a very big wheel.<sup>48</sup>

At this point, Itoh has a sense of looking at himself as through a giant magnifying glass, a way of seeing that reveals sharp details without obscuring the larger environment to which they belong. It is an intensely humbling miniaturisation of selfhood, at once inseparable and isolated, a paradox that contains the seeds of madness for Itoh, who is dependent on the confidence and surety that comes from belonging to a larger group. Not literally washed ashore, Itoh is still unable to awaken to his remoteness and the novel takes its time aggravating this condition in incremental stages until

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<sup>48</sup> Errol Brathwaite, *An Affair of Men* (London: Collins, in conjunction with the Otago Daily Times, 1961), p. 5.

he becomes a military Robinson Crusoe, what literary scholar Jolisa Margaret Gracewood refers to as a 'castaway in khaki.'<sup>49</sup>

If military disposition is not enough to render him representative, the fact of his isolation suggests it, for the scenario of the castaway draws its inspiration from the supposition that the subject is unexceptional and underequipped to survive in his environment (were he otherwise, the subject's increased mobility would probably take the text toward travel writing). What becomes of the unremarkable, luckless beachcomber typically entails material hardship and forced improvisation followed by the excoriating, painful, sometimes sinister process of introspection that offsets environmental boundaries through compulsive exploration within. Brathwaite, however, does not allow his subject even this tremulous outlet, and much of the tension of the novel emerges from Itoh's inability to examine himself and thereby take the novel toward its logical terminus. The pervasive obstruction is not a symptom of maladjustment in Itoh, rather it illustrates that the Japanese subject has no inner world to explore or, put another way, that he wears his instinctive drives on his sleeves, these being, as far as the author is concerned, reducible to violence.

All else is carefully chipped away, beginning with the sex drive, presumably a distraction to any castaway, but, for Itoh, a mere afterword to the climax of his death in battle. While resting at Sipuri, Sedu's village, Itoh's thoughts of his wife blur into the cathartic fantasy of women receiving his cremated ashes in regret, an egomaniacal scenario the novel does nothing to confront, for it fits too readily into the stock explanations of enemy psychology.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, this is not a novel that rebuts comfortable notions of enemy fanaticism, rather it embellishes the image, showing how the urge to violence can only ever lie dormant, and that the ritualisation of death and funerary rites is intimately bound to one's status and performance as a soldier. The latter was true for the allies as well, but was hardly something servicemen were expected to dwell upon eagerly. Itoh's fantasy supplements

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49 Jolisa Margaret Gracewood, "All At Sea: Literature of the Pacific War" (Ph.D., Cornell University, 2005), p. 140.

50 Brathwaite, *An Affair of Men*, p. 30.

eros with thanatos, and is heavily laced with irony as he objectifies the 'barbarian' land around him, even as his mind turns to rituals that bespeak a desire for violence that breaks down such distinctions. Bordering on anhedonia, the deflected eroticism provides the first glimpse of someone for whom violence is a desirable end in itself, rather than a last resort, or even just one option among several.

As he moves from village to village, Itoh cross-examines the natives to determine the route taken by the fleeing airmen. When he meets resistance, he inflicts cruel punishments, little less than outright extermination, which the villagers announce by drum communications. Knowing as he does that the drums will relate his punitive actions to the villages he has not reached, the effect reinforces obedience even without executions being publicly visible, thus reducing the likelihood of future resistance. Through these methods and by dint of superior numbers, Itoh dominates, but his advantage gradually wanes after he arrives at Sipuri and splits his force, the better to pursue his quarry in different directions. Maddeningly, these journeys end up being circular, meaning that Itoh returns to Sipuri whether he likes it or not, and his outbursts escalate accordingly, revealing him to be a tool of violence rather than its master.<sup>51</sup> The strangeness of Itoh's enforced sequestering at Sipuri comes near to another scenario familiar to the war generation: that of the utopian refuge, an idea that intermeshes easily with the castaway's situation, though it is not dependent on any particular locale. Prior to World War II, James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933) provided arguably the best, certainly the most enduring, picture of a sanctuary located in Tibet, a sort of intellectual colony-cum-archive for the select few that possess the integrity, knowledge, and vision to be worthwhile saving.<sup>52</sup> One way of reading Brathwaite's novel is to take the Hiltonian formula and

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51 Shades of the same sort of unprovoked violence endured by Bougainville Islanders, this time during their civil war, has been recently recalled by the New Zealand author Lloyd Jones. Jones portrays villagers as victimised by Papuan and rebel forces alike, the latter using refurbished weapons left behind by the Japanese. See Lloyd Jones, *Mr Pip* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 100.

52 As Peter Bishop puts it, "In a sense, Tibet's peripheral place gave permission for many Europeans and Americans to use it as an imaginative escape, as a sort of time out, a relaxation from rigid rational censorship. Time and again Tibet was endowed with all the qualities of a dream, a collective hallucination." See Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel-writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 7.

then observe the perverse mismatch between place and the newcomers who arrive. Both Shangri-La and Sipuri are almost supernaturally self-enclosed and withdrawn, hugging a select few in a protective embrace, and yet Itoh desires no such protection. Indeed, the absurdity of his predicament is in no small part linked to his refusal to take hold of the lifeline Sipuri represents. His worldview is constructed around a binary that admits no exceptions, and yet the community in which he resides is hospitable and accommodating on all matters except forced allegiance. The pressure builds. Rather than the moving appeal of kindred spirits united in cultural preservation, as in Hilton's work, Brathwaite slips into a deliberate bathos. We are invited to laugh at the resistant oddball Itoh makes of himself and there is but a small step between pondering what one might do in his place and speaking of an elusive Japanese difference. The trope of the utopian refuge, appealing to an antiquarian nostalgia, may serve as a textual jigsaw-puzzle, containing missing pieces until solitary pilgrims stumble in to supply them. Yet should the newcomer's shape not fit the space prepared them, the picture becomes a means of deriding their (in this case, national) character, and if the reader identifies with the picture then the process passes largely unseen.

Itoh's blindness to his position makes him search for objects on which to vent his acrimony, none of which are individually important since they all function as outlets or scapegoats for his private turmoil and are intended only to demonstrate this. The cyclical dramas that lead to his outbursts accumulate as evidence for Itoh's non-development, adding up to the conclusion that violence, especially in opposition to the Christian pacifism Sedu espouses, must be especially pronounced in Japanese subjects. This is the conclusion we are meant to draw after Itoh beats Sedu unconscious:

Ten minutes later, Captain Itoh walked back into the compound. He was still raging, but paradoxically felt better than at any time since his arrival here. He had done with mental gymnastics, he decided. Action was the thing, even if it was temper-directed and ill-controlled,

because it was lifting him out of the rut into which he had been sinking. It was the atmosphere of this damned place that was affecting him.<sup>53</sup>

At this point, Itoh loses any claim to acting on reasonable terms. Until now, his beliefs have placed him on a comparable or higher level to the other belief-practices in the area, Christianity and headhunting. These latter beliefs both act to restrict violence. Sedu's Christian community has cured itself of such urges, observing that Jesus Christ has already enacted the consummate role of the victim-sacrifice and that no human example can go higher. For their part, the headhunters appease their need to go on the rampage through careful selection of worthy targets for their collection of heads, something that Sedu makes clear when he affirms that headhunting is hardly a general but actually a highly particular practice.<sup>54</sup> Itoh's creed, ostensibly meant to prevent violence in military or political terms, in fact devolves into the most formless violence of all, collapsing any grounds for civilisational superiority.

By qualifying these cultures in such terms, I have in mind René Girard's seminal work, *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), which established distinctions between religious and judicial systems of governance. Girard posited the thesis that sacrifices always involve substituting an object for an actual guilty party because "society is seeking to deflect upon a relatively indifferent victim, a 'sacrificeable' victim, the violence that would otherwise be vented on its own members, the people it most desires to protect."<sup>55</sup> Brathwaite's novel illustrates this process in action, for example when Itoh selects a young man to be tortured in place of Sedu, who has fled into the jungle.<sup>56</sup> But the internal economy of these moments masks how the reader becomes engaged in the same process of selecting the sacrificeable subject. To observe how this transpires, we can turn to the final scene, a peripeteia in which Itoh at last acknowledges the possibility that Sedu is not an enemy agent:

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<sup>53</sup> Brathwaite, *An Affair of Men*, p. 173.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>55</sup> René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Brathwaite, *An Affair of Men*, p. 176-83.

Sedu was all he had claimed to be, no more and no less, and had been all the time. He had no strength, yet he had beaten Captain Itoh, and thereby disgraced Nippon.

Honour was almost irreparably tarnished. Almost. Yet something of honour might still be salvaged. There was a way. He was sitting up, now, and he turned his head and gazed at the table, and at that which lay upon it.<sup>57</sup>

Facing up to his conceit, Itoh the thinking man comes close to a revelation. But it is purely intellectual and does not affect his inner compulsion to violence, which consumes him in the most literal way possible. Until the very end, Brathwaite dangles the prospect of revelation before Itoh without indulging it at any stage beyond speculation. As the tension mounts through this method, the reader's comprehension is positioned at the end of a finishing line that Itoh never reaches, an elevated vantage point that brings with it a self-satisfied feeling of superiority. That Itoh departs the story in much the same state of mind that he enters it only cements this aspect further, allowing as it does an easy dismissal of him as the incorrigibly myopic warmonger. At the moment of metamorphosis, when he realises that non-violence is a workable, even powerful worldview, the possibility of a transformative effect upon Itoh's character is snatched away. Japanese servicemen, if not wholly incapable of attaining revelations, are textually denied these moments in favour of the so-called 'harakiri' motif expected of them. This closes off any discussion of potentially comparable systems of thinking and acting, and displaces any embryonic or residual feelings of guilt over the allied prosecution of the war onto a subject who, conveniently enough, has a cultural legacy of ritualised human sacrifice. The latter is endlessly recycled and invoked as a means to restore or maintain confidence that the war ended the right way.

### **Post-war Nostalgia and *The Thin Red Line***

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 255.



Brathwaite's novel had fun playing off the quintessential Japanese officer against an opaque, pacifist Other, all the while increasing a general sense of entrapment until the officer's nerves are strained to breaking point. James Jones was likewise interested in the withering effect that social and geographical enclosures can have upon men, though in his novel these tensions intersect with an old staple of combat fiction: the realisation that your company is next in line and that there is no putting it off. There is an awful inexorability, bordering on due process, that builds up to the cataclysm of combat, and governing this compulsion is the institution to which all the men belong, the United States Army. Yet here we need to be careful, because Jones is a writer who defies attempts to pin down and summarise the object against which his barbs take aim. An obvious target, the military – more specifically, the Army – was by far the largest and most significant institution of the day, but Jones' position in respect to it is changeful, oscillating between disdain and nostalgia. Cognisant that the Army could erode individualism, he is likewise aware that it contained an array of characters who could never wholly acculturate, and these are the people who occupy his attention. Throughout the novel, Jones eulogises the would-be hoboes, freeloaders, alcoholics, criminals, and other riff-raff who made up the professional Army prior to the Second World War, people who had sought and found sanctuary from the Great Depression and who, rough-hewn and ill-fitting as they were, constituted a far more jumbled – and, one assumes, more interesting – assortment of odds and ends than the individual parts of subsequent armies.<sup>58</sup> To these people, military life was all that they asked it to be, and yet there was something Faustian about the pact they made, for if the Army insulated them from the economic slump of the pre-war years, it likewise shut them off from the upswing of the wartime boom. The Army, figuratively speaking, was like a giant time capsule that jealously grouped its members together, burying them (sometimes literally) for a duration, and then disgorging them onto a world wherein a good many familiar frames of social reference had

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<sup>58</sup> During his pre-war experience in Hawaii, Jones confirmed that there was a trend toward converging on military service as a form of economic security. As one study puts it, "He was in a world of outcasts, sons of unemployed miners and factory workers who had little education and no prospects for a job during the depths of the depression. The army was a refuge, a relatively safe haven for the young renegades and castaways of American society. James Jones, a self-designated outcast since high school days, found a refuge in this stratified society of the old army." See George Hendrick, Helen How, and Don Sackrider, *James Jones and the Handy Writers' Colony* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001), p. 22-3.

disappeared overnight. Unsurprisingly, many simply could not cope with the scale of change, as E. B. Sledge recalls in his combat memoir:

Most of us received letters from family and civilian friends. But occasionally we received letters from old Company K buddies who had returned to the States. Their early letters expressed relief over being back with family or with “wine, women, and song.” But later the letters often became disturbingly bitter and filled with disillusionment. Some expressed a desire to return if they could get back into the old battalion. Considering the dangers and hardships those men had been through before they were sent home, and considering our situation in front of Shuri, the attitudes of our buddies who had returned Stateside puzzled us.<sup>59</sup>

The deracination that veterans underwent was not unknown to Jones, whose subsequent novel, *Whistle* (1978), took up this very issue by following a group of wounded soldiers returning home, a putatively happy occasion. There they become lost in the uproarious rhythms of material accumulation. Cities, businesses, and whole cross-sections of the population (women especially) have moved so far beyond the boundaries they once observed that they cannot be recognised for what they were.<sup>60</sup> Initially dazed, the men become incredulous until they question whether adjustment is possible at all (the solution: alcohol and suicide). What is interesting to note is the way in which these veterans seek solace in each other’s company in proportion to their disgruntlement.<sup>61</sup> The Army, once an economic refuge, reassumes its role, this time as a point of group solidarity, a sort of wagon circle that affords limited but necessary protection to the

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59 E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 266.

60 New Zealand cities did not undergo an expansion comparable in scale to that of, say, wartime Los Angeles, but returning servicemen did notice that roles for men and women in the workplace had become blurred in their absence. For a brief summary of how women responded to wartime labour demands, see Chrissy Kouwenhoven, “War on the Home Front,” *New Zealand Memories*, August / September 2010.

61 The same phenomenon is present in a novel by a New Zealand veteran of the Italian Campaign. See Slatter, *A Gun in My Hand*.

frightened souls within. Although the Army could be abusive, insofar as it serves as a vessel for these assorted people, or even a surrogate father, one cannot condemn it out of hand.<sup>62</sup>

In the years following World War II, and through the 1950's, a steady stream of popular works grappled with the thorny problem of describing an institution that, for many, continued to perform as a refuge when all else failed, but also seemed, to many others, to have ushered in much of the regrettable socio-economic changes, such as the cult of instant gratification.<sup>63</sup> Writers immediately scented that changes had taken place, one of the best responses being J. D. Salinger's short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" (1948), which opens with New York advertising consultants, those who turned Freud's theories of the unconscious to their advantage in forging the consumer culture, and ends with the suicide of a returned serviceman. Sitting at the ringside of the socio-economic transition, Salinger struck a pessimistic note, likening a lost future to the figure of a little girl that the veteran kisses away before shooting himself.<sup>64</sup> In his study of war stories of this time, literary scholar Morris Dickstein scents an unmistakably political inclination:

They reflected the writers' fear that victory over Fascism abroad had been purchased at the cost of intolerance and regimentation at home. These war novelists' nightmare was a world threatened not by foreign tyrants and obvious villains but by large, impersonal social organizations.<sup>65</sup>

Responsive literary trends coincided with a general unease over whether American society might be on the verge of decline, faced as it was with the prospect of halting the spread of Communism in

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<sup>62</sup> Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the Modern Man* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *The 1950s* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), p. xxi.

<sup>64</sup> Salinger's story is typical of the prognostication contained within much postwar fiction. As literary scholar Elizabeth A. Wheeler puts it, "Postwar fiction by men often displays a philosophy of rootlessness, an abstract American sense of place bound to no particular locality. Alienation becomes an existential stance rather than a psychological problem to be aired and resolved." See Elizabeth A. Wheeler, *Uncontained: Urban Fiction in Postwar America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Morris Dickstein, *Leopards in the Temple: The Transformation of American Fiction 1945-1970* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 30.

parts of the world it knew little about.<sup>66</sup> Novels such as James Michener's *Sayonara* (1954) suggested that the military was an unwieldy bureaucratic apparatus bent on making life difficult even for its rising stars. But there were others, such as Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (1955) and Richard Yates' *Revolutionary Road* (1961), that contained characters who remembered their military service fondly. In these stories, the married breadwinner, deeply frustrated in his domestic life generally, imagines military life as an escape into freedom of movement and thought. Although this fantasy may seem like a perverse step backward, for some the Army became an imagined return to a masculinity they had lost.<sup>67</sup> The most obvious example is Max Shulman's *Rally Round the Flag, Boys!* (1958), in which the protagonist, Harry Bannerman, finds solace from his wife's henpecking initially in the arms of another woman, but latterly in a silo where he achieves full satisfaction in the elevation of a large, white missile.

Puerile symbolism aside, the military offered two possibilities that domesticity could never match: comradeship and revelation. Both fascinate Jones, and while he takes up no particular position in respect to domesticity, he certainly does have a stake in the debate over what the Army could do to and for the individual character. I suggest that, like Michener, he was ambivalent, cognisant that, at its worst, the Army brutalised its subjects, but also that it was capable of placing men in positions where they could excel as nowhere else.<sup>68</sup> Each of these perspectives emerges through the trope of combat revelations, a distinctly private phenomenon that nonetheless takes place in the midst of communal conflagration. Their variant nature represents a confluence of environmental particulars and a personality predisposed ahead of time to receive knowledge in a special area. As the novel opens with the men of Charlie Company bracing themselves for their first

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66 Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 101-3.

67 Jon Robert Adams, *Male Armor: The Soldier-Hero in Contemporary American Culture*, ed. Robert Newman, Cultural Frames, Framing Culture (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), p. 15.

68 Other critics have noted the ambivalent quality in Jones' writing. See Ellen Serlen Uffen, "James Jones' Trilogy, Or Is War Really Hell?," *Midamerica: The Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature* 10(1983): p. 139.

combat experience, much of the characterisation lays the ground for distinctive revelatory experiences and, cushioned within the military argot and backslapping bonhomie, several typologies materialise. Doll, for example, represents the heroic optimist who has just learned that he can forge his personality into whatever suits him best.<sup>69</sup> His philosophy is convincing only as a series of additions, a building of oneself in pyramidal fashion, but it taps into the persistent myth of the rugged frontiersman whose martial spirit is honed and regenerated only outside the constraints of civilisation. Doll's exposure to combat leads him in an upward curve toward personal excellence, tempered by a few misassumptions along the way. Among these is the belief that increasing personal armament will improve combat efficiency, a common mistake repeated by servicemen at least as far back as the American Civil War, when a process known as 'simmering down' saw soldiers dispensing of burdensome equipment and outdated notions as they faced up to the practicalities of combat.<sup>70</sup> Paul Fussell notes an identical annulment process in World War II:

The Japanese 'defense' of islands like Tarawa, Saipan, or Iwo Jima could hardly be called 'combat' at all in the traditional sense. It was suicide stubbornly protracted, and for the Americans the experience argued the uselessness of agility and cunning when sheer overwhelming force was available. More than the Japanese and Americans died on those islands. Cleverness died too, and fine distinctions. Outmoded now, hopelessly irrelevant, were such former military values and procedures as the alertness of the scout; the skill at topographical notice of the observer in the tethered balloon; the accurately worded message correctly written out (with carbon copy) in the nifty little book of Field Message Forms.<sup>71</sup>

As a veteran himself, Jones is clearly aware that island combat disabused people of manifold misassumptions, and Doll is the hyperactive cheerleader of several, such as the romantic idea of

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<sup>69</sup> James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* (London: Collins, 1962), p. 22.

<sup>70</sup> Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), p. 113-5.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 8-9.

saving a bullet for oneself when the realities of industrial warfare render any such scenario improbable. The war as Jones presents it is a stripped-down, body-driven construction in which monetary exchange and material acquisition become steadily less meaningful as combat draws nearer. One character who realises this is the Company clerk, Fife, a lacklustre youth who epitomises the withdrawn coward. To the readership of the day, he is recognisable as a nonentity whose advancement follows circumstances beyond his control. In a dismissive aside, Storm, the Company cook, summarises him thus: "He was a good enough kid. He just hadn't been away from home long enough. And Storm, who had started off bumming during the Depression when he was only fourteen, couldn't find kids like that very interesting."<sup>72</sup> Hopelessly other-directed, combat alone suffices to make Fife interesting, but not vice-versa. More streetwise than Doll and less cowardly than Fife is the First Sergeant Welsh, the talented cynic whose self-alienation allows him to take an added step back in order to provide a running commentary on the ignoble nature of war and combat, which he sees as little more than a quarrel between neighbours over where to put the garden fence. It is he who provides the most blatant commentary on how the war presages an era of declining personal agency:

"You know what it is, don't you? You realise what's happened, what's happening." Welsh's eyes brooded across Storm's face. "There aint any choice. There's no choice left for anybody. And it aint only here, with us. It's everywhere. And it aint going to get any better. This war's just the start. You understand that."<sup>73</sup>

As with the best prophecies, the meaning is vague but compelling, and made all the more quixotic by Welsh's unwavering commitment to the Army, despite his foreknowledge of what that institution, the combat it leads to, or consequent civilian regimentation means for himself and others. It is but

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<sup>72</sup> Jones, *The Thin Red Line*, p. 39.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

one instance of Jones' deliberately obfuscatory feints, serving to keep the reader off balance and, quite possibly, communicate a degree of the uprootedness his characters experience.

Having grouped together a number of characters who, quite apart from their difference from each other, manifest contradictions internal to themselves, Jones goes on to describe a series of revelations of equal contradistinction. Most of these function loosely either as critiques of combat and the institutions that insist on it; or insights into the self and its identity. Although the first of these concerns us more, in light of the literary trends in the decade preceding publication as well as Jones' own vacillating position where military service was concerned, once again such selectiveness is to misrepresent the novel as overtly partisan. The array of revelations is more significant than its individual parts, and if it feeds into a political commentary on the nature of post-war society then it is along the general lines of how ill-suited veterans are to compete as 'organisation men.' This much seems inarguable when we observe how critically astute soldiers take umbrage at their dehumanisation in a military arena, while those who revel in combat achieve an ecstasy verging on the sublime. Both experiences sound the death knell to the possibility of a seamless transition into the post-war suburban dream. Irreversibly disillusioned or ruinously stimulated, these men will carry serious handicaps, aggravated by the disregard of a society whose index of national health follows corporate profit margins. While *Whistle* would go on to present the case, the combat revelations of the prior novel form the evidence on which it depends.

As stated, revelations are not all of a kind, and a full appreciation must take account of historian Yuval Noah Harari's study, *The Ultimate Experience* (2008), which traces the evolution of the combat revelation as an idea, principally with European, American and Israeli subjects as receivers and agents. Throughout the twentieth-century, Harari identifies two schools of thought put forward by veterans regarding what happens to the mind under combat conditions. The first of these is the distinctly earthbound 'materialistic' position, which eschews flights of intellectual or spiritual fancy and sees combat as a paring down of sentimentality. As Harari puts it, "Once the

body takes over it remains in control, and no 'purer mind' is thereby liberated. According to the materialists, the deepest and most important truth revealed by war is simply that man is matter."<sup>74</sup> This intersects with the notion of 'simmering down' but represents something more fundamental than the discovery that one's weapons or tactics are inadequate or inappropriate. It is the realisation of combat as an instinctive, reactive, animalistic series of actions, utterly shorn of mannerly attributes. The killing of the first Japanese that Charlie Company encounters bears this out, for it takes place when an unprepossessing assistant forward clerk goes to relieve himself. Surprised and forced to fight, his method of killing is as far from clean as possible, requiring several attempts and leaving him covered in filth.<sup>75</sup> Jones draws particular attention to this initial success, because it heralds a succession of deaths, almost none of which are gallant, graceful, coordinated, or edifying.<sup>76</sup> To reinforce the point, this same clerk later dies in Fife's arms, leaving Fife staggered at the realisation that combat tests nothing except one's willingness to remain in attendance.<sup>77</sup> In league with this personal revelation goes the more overarching realisation as to the forces leading up to this point, namely those of industrial production. Even before the Company reaches the battlefield, these become apparent in aerial combat about the transport vessels, which Fife likens to a business venture:

It was as though a clerical, mathematical equation had been worked out, as a calculated risk: Here were two large, expensive ships and, say, twenty-five large aircraft had been sent out after them. [...] The very idea itself, and what it implied, struck a cold blade of terror into Fife's essentially defenceless vitals, a terror both of unimportance, his unimportance, and of

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<sup>74</sup> Yuval Noah Harari, *The Ultimate Experience: Battlefield Revelations and the Making of Modern War Culture, 1450-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 15-16.

<sup>75</sup> Jones, *The Thin Red Line*, p. 157.

<sup>76</sup> The incident may also be significant because it supposedly recalls a signature moment in Jones' own experience on Guadalcanal. For an examination of the controversy surrounding this assertion, see Robert Blaskiewicz, "James Jones on Guadalcanal," *War, Literature, and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 20, no. 1-2 (2008).

<sup>77</sup> Jones, *The Thin Red Line*, p. 232.



powerlessness: his powerlessness. [...] He did not mind dying in a war, a real war, – at least, he didn't think he did – but he did not want to die in a regulated business venture.<sup>78</sup>

Such a lament serves as an epitaph to much of the turmoil that follows, but not everyone's thoughts are reducible to tirades against mass organisations. Indeed, the bombing of the ships results in casualties who, observable to Charlie Company, provide hints that an existential boundary exists between the injured and the able-bodied, one that Charlie Company is sensible to but unable to properly engage or imagine.

Combat's capacity to enrich or enlarge one's understanding of hitherto delimited knowledge areas, or even facilitate entry into new modes of perception, is what Harari identifies as the 'idealist' school of revelation. Those who undergo this experience, Harari explains, tend to describe it in terms that emphasise a heightened sensitivity: "The flow of time changes, slows down, or stops altogether. Unfamiliar sensations appear, and familiar sensations mutate. Awareness becomes completely absorbed in the present moment, and combatants feel more alive ever before [sic]."<sup>79</sup> On the eve of battle, Fife, despite or perhaps because of nervousness, feels an exuberance that illustrates how combat, or the prospect of it, can evoke an enthusiasm for one's comrades that transcends grievances and misgivings.<sup>80</sup> The acting assumption here is that the nearness of combat awakens in the Japanese their innate barbaric proclivities, born out by the discovery of mutilated American captives, whereas Americans are capable of a wider range of responses. The idealist mode of revelation may therefore function as an accessory to the vilification of enemy forces, though its purpose need hardly take it in this direction. More commonly, it finds attachment to the aristeia of a particular character, or simply emerges unbidden and unannounced, as happens to Bell, a former officer who finds himself pinned down by enemy fire and staring into the glasses of a dead comrade:

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>79</sup> Harari, *The Ultimate Experience: Battlefield Revelations and the Making of Modern War Culture, 1450-2000*, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Jones, *The Thin Red Line*, p. 168.

They had not fallen off. But something about their angle, at least from where Bell lay, magnified the open eyes until they filled the entire lenses. Bell could not help staring fixedly at them, and they stared back with a vastly wise and tolerant amusement. The more Bell stared at them the more he felt them to be holes into the centre of the universe and that he might fall in through them to go drifting down through starry space amongst galaxies and spiral nebulae and island universes.<sup>81</sup>

None of the idealist revelations are objectives for either characters or author, they simply surface between moments and, in the case of Bell, crystallise his doubts into the full-fledged certainty of his wife's infidelity. But set alongside the materialist variety, they endow the soldiers with a heterogeneous panoply that takes them beyond the comparatively humdrum state of affairs back home. It is an irreversible attainment, and sows the seeds of social separatism, if only because the revolutions in American consumption habits were heralding an era in which the visceral experience was promised to shoppers as a reward for purchasing a product. Tapping into Freud's theories on the unconscious, consumer marketing implied that profound experiences were available on demand and on time, provided one possessed the necessary capital to take the plunge. But combat revelations were antithetical in this culture, for these were near-death experiences that fell outside the range of advertisers' knowledge and remained unreplicable. Veterans who had undergone revelations were therefore aberrant, as Salinger's short story pointedly illustrates. For Jones, the Army remained at once complicit in the economic transformations (as well as the best example of abominably inhumane organization in its own right) but it was also the vessel that contained the men whose experiences, within and at the command of that selfsame apparatus, were far and away the best display of personal discovery in an increasingly depersonalised world. The combat revelation was the means to put this process on display, and American soldiers were its chief exponents.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

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In the early 1960's, the distinction between an American and New Zealand literary approach to the Pacific War was not yet readily apparent. Only the most fundamental differences are noticeable, in that Brathwaite's novel contains no New Zealand characters, whereas Jones' contains nothing but Americans. In the prior readings, I have tried to illustrate how the tropes of sacrifice and revelation stand alongside one another as ideological co-productions, each one taking the other as the assumed *modus vivendi* of the allies and Japanese, respectively.

Brathwaite fell back on a castaway narrative to demonstrate just how predictable the Japanese could be. The purpose of Itoh's isolation is to place the Japanese subject under a textual microscope, cordoned off from his fellows, the better to identify (reify) his essential particulars. There is, indeed, something altogether scientific about the way that Brathwaite systematically removes Itoh's companions, through ambush, headhunting, and suicide, exposing the corresponding effects this has upon the Captain, *homo japonensis*. One might draw comparisons with the enervating effects of removal in *Heart of Darkness* (1902), though Conrad's novel shocked readers by exposing the interiority of a European subject; Brathwaite's text, by contrast, is not meant to shock at all. On the contrary, the story's main purpose is to confirm all the suspicions that readers would have had of Japanese behaviours, and to revel in the process, rather like a young boy who plucks the wings off insects. Admittedly, the Captain's Machiavellian analyses of motives and situations camouflage these developments somewhat, though at no point do they remove him as the object under consideration, and ultimately serve in fact to take him further toward the point of violent hysteria that is the alleged terminus of all Japanese psychology. Needless to say, this is not the informative or instructive violence of the combat revelation. Whereas Americans and other allied troops were expected to experience revelations, the Japanese, by contrast, could hardly undergo such profound changes. Violence, for the allies, was an alien condition that took them toward new identities, sometimes alarming, sometimes reassuring, often profound, and never trivial. The

Japanese appeared to inhabit a world in which violence was a natural, inseparable feature and, as such, this left them nowhere to 'progress' to. The polar opposite condition – pacifism and non-violent resistance – might provide a source of revelation, and Sedu continually proffers the possibility. Yet Itoh's fear of becoming a human sacrifice prevents him from entertaining this idea. The irony is that he is indeed sacrificed, but at his own hand, not Sedu's. When the 'harakiri' moment arrives, it is not so much a convenient end as a point of reversal whereby the 'barbarism' Itoh ascribes to the villagers becomes his own attribute. It reveals violence to be a self-perpetuating internal matter to the Japanese, and thus not something that need concern New Zealanders unduly. Violence and the Japanese go hand-in-hand, the story reassures us, and have nothing at all to do with allied affronts, retributions, and countermeasures, which are only ever reactionary and never provocative. The Japanese sacrifice provides pleasant reassurance that the stars are in proper alignment where the allied conscience is concerned.

Brathwaite's depiction of Japanese monomania precludes any personalisation that reaches beyond it. In Jones, on the other hand, the few Japanese who do pop up here and there are faceless automata, utterly shorn of characterisation. Of course, Jones was not at all concerned with sketching enemy personas in his work, but the richness of his portrayal of Charlie Company cannot help but make the contrast a striking one. Nostalgia is built into the overall project as a principal fixture. Jones' writing recalls the high water mark of American expansion into the Pacific, an altogether simpler (pre-nuclear) time in which the war effort was the alpha and omega of military, diplomatic, and industrial attention. Submerged within this phenomenon, the individual soldiers of Charlie Company swim with the tide and recognise, indeed welcome their position within a larger group entity. In this collective unit, all things become level: cowardice, racism, thievery, prisoner mutilation, drunkenness, all merge together, alongside more praiseworthy behavioural examples, in the hands of a writer who stubbornly, intransigently refuses to pass judgement.<sup>82</sup> The nostalgia

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<sup>82</sup> Here I am reminded of Tim O'Brien's proclamation that "A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things they have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it. If at the end of a war story

intersected with trends in social criticism that emerged during the fifties, much of which replayed narratives of the self undergoing engulfment within a larger group.<sup>83</sup> The paradox of Jones' writing is that his love of individuality is evident on any page, but it takes place within an administrative body destined to pave the way for a post-war conformity, something that will threaten the distinctiveness of the very people who have fought to make it happen. For this reason, Jones deploys the trope of the combat revelation, not so much as an antidote or riposte as an outcry, a last gasp before the passing of an era. The principal purpose of *The Thin Red Line* is to bear witness to an American character that was swiftly undergoing decline at the time of publication, and in this respect was not altogether different from similar literary efforts to preserve the details of wartime subcultures.<sup>84</sup> Combat revelations were not unique to the Pacific War, but Jones takes pains to illustrate how their diversity matched and was born of the variety of people who experienced them. At this stage, American subjects were assumed to be the sole purveyors, and regard for the enemy's experience of the war would await the latter decades of the twentieth-century.

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you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie." See Tim O'Brien, "How to Tell a True War Story," in *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology*, ed. Paula Geyh, Fred G. Leebron, and Andrew Levy (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 174.

83 K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War: Masculinity, the Vital Center and American Political Culture in the Cold War, 1949-1963* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 97-8.

84 James Dawes, "The American War Novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II*, ed. Marina Mackay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 56-7.

## Chapter 2

### Demonising the Subject

Unchanged to the eye, what I was seeing out there now – in my eye, and beyond that in my mind – was something alien. The lighted circle of pavement below me, the familiar front porches, and the dark mass of houses and town beyond them – were fearful. Now they were menacing, all these familiar things and faces; the town had changed or was changing into something very terrible, and was after me. It wanted me, too, and I knew it.

Jack Finney, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (p. 103)

The image of Japanese soldiers willingly throwing their lives away for the Emperor was hardly an invention of allied propaganda. American servicemen knew from experience that Japanese defenders sold their colonial possessions dearly, and that the ferocity of the fighting became noticeably severer the closer they got to the Japanese mainland. To those Americans who had already survived one or more of the island campaigns that reached Okinawa in mid-1945, the use of atomic weapons brought immediate and welcome relief from the prospect of further slaughter. In the final chapter of my dissertation, we shall return to this moment, or more specifically the avoidance of empathetic imagining in American and New Zealand fictions. For now, though, let us recognise that, in the days when combat was ongoing and worsening, empathy was an obvious casualty of the war. Once news of Pearl Harbor broke, most Americans had precious little sympathy for the enemy in any case, but subsequent experiences in the field took hatreds on both sides to fever pitch. The majority of combat personnel had no patience with viewing the enemy

humanely, a no doubt whimsical exercise alongside the business of staying alive, and, not surprisingly, the combat fiction of James Jones and Norman Mailer reinstated these sentiments. Dichotomous portrayals are the cornerstone to what I have termed 'sacrificing the subject,' an ideological framework present in, but not exclusive to, literary depictions of the enemy that reduces them to stereotypes. Quite simply, the purpose of such material is to assure readers that remaining locked within the closed circuit depictions of progressive, enlightened Americans battling away against steadfast, immutable imperial soldiers is not only an adequate, but actually a complete picture of what took place in the war years. For most white, Anglophone readers in the 1940's and 1950's, this premise would have taken hold without undue difficulty, in large part because, to reiterate, envisaging the Japanese in these terms matched the impressions taken home by those veterans who survived the 'meat grinder' of combat. The Japanese really were that way, apparently, and that was all there was to it.

The trope of the sacrificial, fanatical enemy would retain its place in the background of all literary fictions that dealt with the Pacific War, even those that departed from combat as a topic, though many would contest or reinforce it with material drawn from hitherto marginal perspectives: the prisoner of war, the minority internee, the scientist, all would have their say, as we shall see in the following chapters. These voices would not form all at once or all together, however, and, during the 1950's, the literary climate underwent a change that did not so much delay the production of new perspectives on the Pacific War as shunt them aside to make way for literature that observed and sought rapprochement with the Japanese. Politically speaking, American Occupation forces in Japan had diverged from the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in their belief that securing one's future allies

was more important than remembering the sins of the past.<sup>85</sup> At a purely practical level, this meant re-industrialising the Japanese economy in order to supply goods and manufactures to American personnel stationed on the continent, but getting the American public used to the idea of Japan as ally meant that ideas and cultural understandings also had to be 'produced' and made available to the civilian populace in the United States. In the efforts to meet this demand, we can perceive material that sought in the context of the Cold War to rehabilitate Japan and the Japanese as former aggressors. A couple of well-known examples, James Michener's *Sayonara* (1954) and James Salter's *The Hunters* (1956), show us how this took place. These novels were written as expositions on the lives of fighter pilots during the Korean War, but their authors are also intrigued by the high living that was made available to American personnel on leave in Japan. So intoxicating are the sensory pleasures on offer that neither pilot gives much thought to returning to the United States, as Salter's enchanted character makes plain:

The States were far away, impossible even to think of. Only to be in Tokyo once more, only that, down the wide avenues in the warm evening, beside the river, through the park. There was no pleasure in the world to equal that, as it passed through his mind like bursts of music.<sup>86</sup>

For Korean War servicemen, Japan became what New Zealand had been during the Pacific War: a surrogate for home and, in rarer cases, better than home. These demographic and literary developments did not render the Pacific War a redundant topic, but plainly the

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85 In her study of this transition, Naoko Shibasuwa writes that "Because it retained the necessary components of a successful capitalist society and was strategically located off the Asian mainland, Japan became America's 'bulwark' against communism in the Far East. [...] Thus American policymakers had to abandon their earlier Occupation priorities of democratizing Japan and holding it accountable for its aggressive war against its Asian neighbours." See Naoko Shibasuwa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 3.

86 James Salter, *The Hunters* (New York: Vintage, 1999), p. 184.



trope of the sacrificial enemy was out of step with political exigencies. It also had nothing to say about the experiences of those fresh-faced Americans who were going to East Asia in unprecedented numbers during the postwar years.<sup>87</sup> Facing down Soviet expansionism invigorated the pace at which writers 'reintroduced' their readers to a newly important region, and also became an urgent literary topic in its own right, as evidenced in Eugene Burdick and William J. Lederer's *The Ugly American* (1958).

Retrospective novels like Brathwaite's and Jones' would not participate in this project, for they reflected a time when Americans had approached the Asian region, and the Japanese especially, confrontationally rather than congenially. Literary depictions of the Pacific War (which at this time still called to mind combat novels, by and large) thus came to occupy a marginal position within a literary landscape that had already 'moved on,' drawing a shroud over the war years while the Cold War literary interventions proceeded apace. In practice, this meant that combat novels could say what they liked about the Japanese, precisely because these fictions were set during the early 1940's, a dark period that excused almost anything. Writers like Michener and Salter, on the other hand, tended to 're-dress' the war in cursory fashion, usually meditating upon the irony of shaking hands with someone who, in a prior incarnation, might well have had a rifle pointed in your direction. Times change, and people move on, or if they do not then they are consigned to obscurity. To all appearances, this trade-off appeared to 'draw a line' under the Pacific War, marking it as an interesting series of events, worthy of selective recollection but not exhumation. As an unstated division of literary spoils, the arrangement held a certain neatness. Combat

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<sup>87</sup> Writing of this trend, Christina Klein states that "Part of the reason why Americans were especially interested in Asia after World War II was that the Cold War made Asia important to the United States in ways that it had not been before. [...] Hundreds of thousands of Americans flowed into Asia during the 1940s and 1950s as soldiers, diplomats, foreign aid workers, missionaries, technicians, professors, students, businesspeople, and tourists. Never before had American influence reached so far and so wide into Asia and the Pacific." See Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*, p. 4-5.

writers got to depict the Japanese in the tried and tested ways that had served well enough during the war years, and they obligingly ended their works after a campaign, a battle, or the war itself; conversely, those who wrote of Asia at the time of the Cold War picked up where the combat writers left off, almost as if the war had never taken place. Nobody policed this discourse, of course, it was merely self-reinforcing, buoyed by the self-confidence of a United States that had reduced the industries of its enemies to such a degree that there seemed little harm in allowing a limited revival. As long as the Japanese economy remained comparatively weak and compliant with American strategy in the region, in other words, the cultural paradigms of the Pacific War would have no bearing on current affairs or their representation in literature.

Figuratively speaking, this tradeoff was tantamount to halfway corking a champagne bottle and waiting for something to come along and shake it. While postwar reconciliation lasted, the pressure was dormant and cultural productions tended to bear this out in quiescent writing of the Salter variety or, as a variant, in comical, patronising depictions such as that of Mr. Yunioshi in Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958).<sup>88</sup> Through the 1960's and 1970's, the cork held, there being nothing to reconnect contemporary international relations with the restless phantasmagoria of the war years. In order for the bottle to shake, one proviso awaited fulfilment: namely, a pretext sufficiently well-observed, preferably emergent from international relations, to provide a battlefield on which the opening salvos had already been fired. Writers and artists were to see their chance in the tempestuous economic conditions of the 1980's and early 1990's, a time when American enthusiasm for Japan as a capitalist bastion sharply declined. Already the practice of

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<sup>88</sup> Although this was generally the case in New Zealand also, Auckland-based writer and journalist Pat Booth wrote *Footsteps in the Sea* (1964) as a meditation on the disputes over fishing rights between Japanese and Kiwi fishermen. Disparaging the bigotry of small town mentalities, Booth's story stands as a cautionary note against using the Pacific War as a way to frame contemporary events. Regrettably, such writing was some twenty years ahead of its time.

picturing Japan and the Japanese as a bumbling, grateful, somewhat effeminate apprentice to the United States had been in gradual decline and, in this era, it ceased altogether. By now, nobody could doubt that the Japanese had outdone themselves in nurturing industries that were robust, productive, adaptable, and ambitious, securing a standard of living conspicuously, if not flagrantly, apparent to outside observers. Suddenly Mr. Yunioshi was a smart man. Clearly he knew how to peddle his wares to his Asian neighbours and, had he been content as a regional big shot, Americans would have viewed him with a mild, possibly bemused curiosity. But he was not content with that, and when Japanese companies began capturing and investing in the U.S. market, for many the tone switched from admiration to alarm. It is worth noting some of the milestones that fed into the hysteria, as these were seized upon as rallying cries in the American news media and elsewhere. Among the more audacious acquisitions was Sony's January 1988 purchase of CBS Records, the world's largest record company, for \$2.2 billion. This proved rather an untimely venture, coinciding as it did with the discovery that same year of involvement by one of Toshiba's subsidiaries in selling military technology to the Soviets. Some American congressmen responded by smashing Toshiba products with hammers outside Congress. Undeterred by political blustering, Sony next year went on to acquire Columbia Pictures Entertainment for \$3.4 billion, and by 1990 Japan's GNP was equal to those of Germany, France, and Britain combined.<sup>89</sup> The statistics alone were compelling evidence of the heft of the Japanese economy, but, to most Americans, numbers were mere abstractions beside the flag-lowering that appeared to be taking place over some of their prized companies. There was, without doubt, an ostentatious quality to the posturing and manoeuvring of the Japanese corporations: the restoration of the Sistine Chapel's frescoes, financed and recorded by the

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<sup>89</sup> Statistics taken from Jean-Marie Bouissou, *Japan: The Burden of Success* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), p. 227.

Nippon Television Network Corporation, seemed the final word on the altered balance of power.<sup>90</sup> One critic put it succinctly, noting that “If Japan seems particularly threatening to the average American, it is because in the last decade or so we appear to have been invaded. The components of this invasion are very familiar by now. Everything is ‘Made in Japan.’”<sup>91</sup>

As always, warfare provided a bracing vocabulary to describe the cutthroat world of mergers and acquisitions: the ‘push’ to ‘takeover’ American assets was a ‘spearhead’ for a larger ‘invasion’ that would ‘seize’ the American market. Swashbuckling sentiments and counter-sentiments of this type echoed in boardrooms on both sides of the Pacific, and the news media reported and fed into the fray, sometimes overlaying a 1930’s context (referencing the Great Depression or trade embargoes or both) or throwing in a few public opinions of the vitriolic sort. In March 1992, for instance, a U.S. senator weighed in against Japanese insinuations as to the laziness of American employees by suggesting that his constituents should “draw a mushroom cloud and put underneath it: Made in America by lazy and illiterate workers and tested in Japan.”<sup>92</sup> By reopening the wounds of the past, such indelicate allusions made plain that the Pacific War was once more a live topic, its unifying social values and permissible (indeed, openly encouraged) culture of antagonism finding ready purchase. Nor were newspapers the sole recyclers of wartime antipathies. At the beginning of the 1980’s, two memoirs, E. B. Sledge’s *With the Old Breed* (1981) and William Manchester’s *Goodbye Darkness* (1981), offered a reminder of the brutality of island fighting in the Pacific. Just how far these veterans-turned-writers shaped public opinion is hard to evaluate, but the changing winds of international relations certainly

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90 Januszcak Waldemar, *Sayonara Michaelangelo* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1990), p. 193-4.

91 Frederik L. Schodt, *America and the Four Japans: Friend, Foe, Model, Mirror* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1994), p. 59.

92 Colin Nickerson, “Senator’s comment ignites fury in Japan,” *Boston Globe*, 5 March 1992.

exerted a stimulating effect that made its mark on Manchester's writing. His evocative opening purposely collapses the distance between past and present:

The plane rises before a spindrift; the darkening sky, broken by clouds like combers, boils and foams overhead. Then the whole weight of evening falls upon me. Old memories, phantoms repressed for more than a third of a century, begin to stir. I can almost hear the rhythm of surf on distant snow-white beaches. I have another drink, and then I learn, for the hundredth time, that you can't drown your troubles, not the real ones, because if they are real they can swim. One of my worst recollections, one I had buried in my deepest memory bank long ago, comes back with a clarity so blinding that I surge forward against the seat belt, appalled by it, filled with remorse and shame.

I am remembering the first man I slew.<sup>93</sup>

A tremendous sense of buoyancy takes Manchester back and forth between air and sea, repression and release, turmoil and restraint. Veterans often needed considerable time, sometimes decades, to work through their experiences, and part of Manchester's purpose here is to communicate the manner in which memories float free through time and space, intact and unpredictable (or, just as bad, intact and predictable). The notion of memories as elemental weather fronts, and the attendant theme of resurrection, does as well for the fears and fantasies that beguile national societies whose experience of victimisation at foreign hands, real or imagined, returns with knee-jerk regularity. To pinpoint the specific signs and signifiers that herald this process, at the individual and societal level, one has only to accompany Manchester on his battlefield tour of the Pacific, a travelogue that contrasts a heady combination of historical research and personal recollection with the (mis)treatment

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<sup>93</sup> William Manchester, *Goodbye Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981), p. 3.

of history in official memorials, such as the *Arizona*, and the behaviours that tourists (mis)take as appropriate. Periodically, the narrative looks askance at the carelessness of human behaviour and yet the barbs of criticism do not fall evenly, for Manchester has different standards for different people, nationality being the operative category. Native Pacific islanders, for example, are treated sympathetically, while Americans are taken on a case-by-case basis, and Japanese are the objects of quiet opprobrium. Here is Manchester's description of Japanese tourists on Guam:

With the round-trip fare from Honshu only \$130, three-fourths of arriving passengers at the airport are Japanese. They have no interest in war relics; they seem unaware that there was a war here. Wearing ten-gallon hats, they feast on thick sirloin steaks in Agana's nightclubs and enthusiastically applaud go-go girls.<sup>94</sup>

The cantankerous distaste written into the passage specifically addresses tourist (mal)practice, but does not disguise the bedrock of hostility that white Americans felt toward Japanese, irrespective of mode and locale.<sup>95</sup> Significantly, the issue has less to do with the Japanese presence, as such, and more with the feeling that they are not present in the right places and in the right manner – namely, recollecting their role in the war by visiting old battlegrounds with gravitas and decorum.<sup>96</sup> Of course, to observe this failure in others is to give oneself an indirect compliment for not following suit and in this respect it

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>95</sup> In his analysis of Manchester's narrative persona, Casey Clabough observes that Manchester does move toward a healing departure from the wartime conflicts that have stayed with him, and that begin the memoir so dramatically. One can read the memoir as redemptive, but at various points in his 1978 pilgrimage, Manchester encounters jarring scenes that inhibit his inner journey. The behaviour of Japanese tourists stands out in particular. See Casey Clabough, "Confronting Traumatic Anxiety: William Manchester's Goodbye, Darkness," *War, Literature, and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 16, no. 1-2 (2004).

<sup>96</sup> For a summary of the controversies that have surrounded Japanese visits to the USS Arizona Memorial, see Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 192-96.

comprises a typical, indeed essential component of tourist discourse.<sup>97</sup> But touristic habits of defamation intersect with another discourse here, one that seeks to 'place' the Japanese in their late nineteenth-century role of conscientious pupil of Western civilisation. As Paul Fussell observes, "Inside every good travel writer there is a pedagogue – often a highly moral pedagogue – struggling to get out."<sup>98</sup> In this case, the pedagogic spirit is outraged by the inattention of his would-be wards. Ideally, the Japanese tourists ought to meditate on the lessons of the past, but Manchester finds that they want nothing of the sort – not any more, at least, than other tourists. They remain, at one and the same time, alarmingly disinterested, even profane, and also disconcertingly akin to most white Americans in their tourist practices. The Japanese, in short, were too close for comfort, not just in the obviousness of their swelling numbers, but in the efficiency with which they had established a 'pleasure periphery,' much as Americans had in the Caribbean or Europeans in the Mediterranean. Once again, the Japanese were playing too fast, too soon at modernisation. They were too different when they ought to be similar, and too similar when they ought to be different.

In the following sections, we shall observe how American and New Zealand fictions played upon and responded to concerns that the Japanese were intruding into or annexing whole sections of the their national space. Whether these productions represent a fair assessment of Japanese political, social, or economic imperatives is not at issue, for in each case the writer sidesteps such questions, opting for ready-to-hand models and literary

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97 Jonathan Culler, "Semiotics of Tourism," *The American Journal of Semiotics* 1, no. 1/2 (1981): p. 2. On this subject, the well-known Australian public intellectual, Donald Horne, stated that "As tourists we proclaim what matters in existence and we display who we are and declare who they are (and the 'they' can sometimes include other, but lesser, breeds of tourists)." See Donald Horne, *The Intelligent Tourist* (McMahons Point, N.S.W.: Margaret Gee Publishing, 1992), p. 5.

98 Paul Fussell, ed. *The Norton Book of Travel* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), p. 15.

tropes of a seniority that rescinds the burden of proof and ushers the reader down a blind alley of essentialism. The destination was identical, as was the ideology underpinning the whole operation, but the apparitions that appeared as tormentors, drawn from inflammatory issues and / or the media bogeymen of the day, were tuned to the localism of each country. In New Zealand's case, the influx of Japanese tourists was more or less the first time that people experienced their might-have-been-conquerors as approachable subjects within their own country. Generally speaking, Kiwis had mixed feelings about their guests, but some artists introduced a gothic mode of interpretation, literalising the threat of a 'takeover' in individual encounters. Two short story writers, Keri Hulme and Vivienne Plumb, expounded this point of view, creating a protean subject that ebbs and flows, shifting between the visible and the invisible, and squeezing New Zealanders out of their very bodies in the process. In their vision, the Japanese harbour a covetous, dissimulating characteristic purposely hard to grasp, and reinforced by a special breed of confidence peculiar to those tourists who take and consume without regard for their effect on the host society, though it is the specific nation(alism) of the tourists in question, and not tourism itself, that drives the critique. Intervening in this polemic, Ian Middleton's novel, *Reiko* (1990), writes into the Japanese a 'travel' mentality – that is, one of self-education – that runs counter to the notion of tourists as beasts of prey. The presence of an inquisitive rather than acquisitive drive in the travellers returned a sense of self-possession to New Zealanders, since it implied that theirs was a country with something of value that could intrigue, charm or beguile the newcomer while remaining safely and tantalisingly 'out of reach.' Just what New Zealand possessed that could command such interest was, at first glance, admittedly hard to see, a quandary that leads Middleton to alchemise deficit into asset: decidedly underdeveloped by Japanese standards, New Zealand becomes a safe



haven of anti-modernism.<sup>99</sup> Literary repackaging of this order presented few problems, involving little more than a shift in the country's 'unspoiled' image of natural environments to serve as antitoxin to the scourge of urban culture and development elsewhere, particularly in Japan. American writers, on the other hand, found no stockpiled resources of antitoxin within their own culture to draw upon, owing to the position of the United States as a premier nation of capitalist industrialisation, meaning that demonstrable economic strength resulted in a destitute armoury of literary paradigms upon which to draw.<sup>100</sup> The problem, in essence, was precisely what Manchester had observed: namely, that the Japanese were similar to Americans. This was especially true of their dog-eat-dog business practices (notwithstanding the promulgation of an 'Asiacentric' work ethic and literature within several East and Southeast Asian nations), which took to Americans what Americans considered 'theirs' to take to the world. This reverse trend, numerated as the transition from creditor to debtor nation, sparked off a crisis of faith: suddenly the bedrock of U.S. national identity, in economic terms at least, no longer appeared especially unique, or even proficient. Culturally speaking, the question became a matter of where to locate the foundations of U.S. national (and global) power when a foreign (and non-Western) nation appeared to be surpassing the United States under the banner of capitalism.<sup>101</sup> Neutralising the authority of capitalism in the way that Middleton did was not an option, and thus the

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99 For an examination of New Zealand's anti-modernist cultural tendencies, see Leonard Wilcox, "Postmodernism or Anti-modernism?," *Landfall* 39, no. 3 (1985).

100 The perennial exception to the rule, Kurt Vonnegut, published *Galapagos* (1985) as a novel that toys with antimodern and anti-tourist themes. True to form, the story is primarily a satirical reflection on humanity's death drive and the consequent (yet hidden) difficulties of sustaining our claim to be the 'highest' evolved organism. But the novel also furnishes scenarios that encourage us to regard the Japanese investment in computer technology as buffoonish. When the last surviving humans take refuge in the Galápagos Islands, the most sophisticated Japanese computer, Mandarax, becomes laughably irrelevant to their needs and is cast into the Pacific Ocean.

101 The crisis was one of distinction, as David Morley and Kevin Robins recognised in noting that "The unpalpable reality is that Japan, that most Oriental of Oriental cultures, may now have become the most (post)modern of all societies." See David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 160.

course taken involved decrying the Japanese. They had overstepped the mark, and deserved everything they got for their malodorous propinquity. But stony-eyed admonitions were never likely to inspire sensitive literary gestures and the most generous commendation one might append to the fiction recognises its straightforwardness. Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* (1992), almost a compendium of journalistic inroads into the polemic, is representative of fears that the nation was being swallowed whole by foreign investors. Here, tourism is not an object of study but a structuring methodology, one that obliges Americans to hurry from place to place in a series of episodic snapshots, each offering a window into the national demise. That the Japanese have partial influence over the tour's agenda, as well as comprising its theme, adds to the spectre of a Japanese (post)modernity that confounds the plain-thinking American.<sup>102</sup>

### **Mr. Moto 'does' New Zealand**

The most alarmist American rhetoric restaged the argument about Japanese expansionism, drawing upon the icon of Pearl Harbor to assert that the spate of corporate acquisitions amounted to another 'sneak attack,' albeit shifted onto the plane of economics. Part and parcel with this was the racial profiling of the enemy in animal terms, suggesting that the deep-rooted instinctive artifice epitomised in Pearl Harbor was ineradicably and

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<sup>102</sup> The Australian media theorist, McKenzie Wark, has stated that "The passage from the modern to the postmodern is also the passage from Fordism to Sonyism; the passage of the locus of technocultural power from the manufacture of standardized, mass-produced goods to the manufacture of quality products designed to sit in a variety of specialized market niches." Whether or not we agree with McKenzie's (perhaps unintentional) suggestion that the postmodern arose during the 1980's, his suggestion that the Japanese work ethic and industrial engineering model, along with its cultural offshoots ('Sonyism'), could serve or even drive postmodernism with a strength sufficient to render time-honoured American production methods and associative cultures ('Fordism') redundant is an intriguing premise. One possible reading of *Rising Sun* might demonstrate this critical framework through observing how the Los Angeles police fall back on crude, standardised, 'Fordist' responses ill-suited to a chameleon mystery that changes its form to suit each moment of the investigation. See McKenzie Wark, "From Fordism to Sonyism: Perverse Readings of the New World Order," *New Formations* 15(1991): p. 45.

irrepressibly representative of the Japanese people as a whole.<sup>103</sup> That New Zealand armed forces had not been a victim of the original 'day of infamy' did not necessarily render the rhetoric inoperable Down Under, as the legacy of Sinophobic borrowings from North American newspaper cartoons attests to the capacity of anti-Asian sentiments to bridge continents.<sup>104</sup> But to fully deploy the Pearl Harbor referent, one had to imagine New Zealand as imminent or recurrent victim, and herein a nagging caveat remained: to wit, what 'targets' did the country have to warrant such an 'attack'? Up until 1973, the United Kingdom had guaranteed a market for New Zealand exports, these being dairy, agricultural, and forest products in the main, and although British accession to the EEC forced New Zealand to diversify its customer base, this did not translate into a shift from agribusiness to the high-tech and / or entertainment industries so desirable to the Japanese. Farms remained the chief source of tradable goods, which effectively meant that New Zealand possessed few objects likely to attract Japanese attention, and likewise suggested that the introduction of competitively priced Japanese imports would not force New Zealand businesses into bankruptcy.<sup>105</sup> As it turned out, there were noticeable benefits to the increasing economic ties with Japan, not the least of which were affordable, reliable second-hand cars, offloaded from container ships, that swiftly consigned the previous generation to an overdue retirement.<sup>106</sup> So popular did the new cars become that one New Zealand hard

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103 Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham, MA: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 54.

104 For an overview of newspaper cartoons, see Manying Ip and Nigel Murphy, *Aliens at my Table: Asians as New Zealanders see them* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2005).

105 Opportunities to showcase New Zealand's 'global brand' in Japan fell back upon the country's agricultural base. A case in point was the 37th annual Snow Festival in Hokkaido, for which national teams sculpted images, such as a London bus or the Statue of Liberty, out of snow and ice. The New Zealand team produced a sheep-dipping scene. See Diana Wichtel, "Cold-cut in sheep-shape," *NZ Listener*, June 1986.

106 Crucially, New Zealand had no domestic auto industry to fret over, although it would be technically incorrect to say that it had never possessed one. In the sixties and seventies, the Trekka came off the production line, a vehicle that bore some resemblance to the Land Rover but relied upon imported Škoda

rock band changed its name from the Trinkets to the Datsuns, a relatively transparent sign of the recognition value attached to Japanese marques. In the United States, Japanese products similarly acquired reputation, but there the mood was less festive, largely because anyone who purchased a Honda, a Mitsubishi, or a Toyota had made the decision not to purchase a Buick, Chrysler, or Ford. That added up to job losses on the assembly line, and the grudges people nurtured manifested in June 1982 when two unemployed workers beat a Chinese American to death, in part because they thought him Japanese and linked him to the decline of the Detroit auto industry. Given the disparity between these case studies, one a harmless makeover, the other a murder, it is tempting to plot national responses on a line graph featuring a sliding scale of acquiescence pegged against the health of domestic industries. But although the correlation undoubtedly stands, it does not suffice to explain away less neighbourly New Zealand responses to the Japanese.

As we shall see in *Rising Sun*, literary vilification could draw upon specific real-life examples of business sector trends, leaving no doubt as to the author's stance in respect to them. But one did not require a cache of ready-to-order leitmotifs, such as the Sony acquisitions, to feed the engine of alarmism; New Zealand writers proved that the mere fact of Japanese power was enough, particularly when melancholy eyes looked back at the self-enclosed socio-economic world pre-1973. Literary scholar Patrick Evans has identified in this moment a key turning-point in New Zealand's approach to the world: "Now, suddenly, the country was being defrosted, its citizens socially, psychologically and economically exposed to the air, abandoned by the mother country to an indifferent and newly challenging world in which its competitors were unfamiliar nations from outside the old

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engines. Drivers noticed the difference, and production tailed off in 1973. For an historical overview, see Michael Stevenson, *This is the Trekka* (Wellington: Creative New Zealand, 2003), p. 11-39.

colonial matrix.”<sup>107</sup> Rather unfortunately, this shock coincided with the increased visibility of Japanese tourists, whose bulging wallets made them the inevitably bitter personification of a foreign nation on a far surer economic footing. The literary response eschewed corporations as sites of contestation and infestation, and instead saw the human-to-human relations of the body politic as a terrain in which the weaker (New Zealand) vessel falls into the hands of an all-consuming foreign agent. The most exemplary illustration of this gothic ‘possession’ is Keri Hulme’s “Kaibutsu-San,” the title of which (“Mr. Monster”) suggests that everyday niceties are but a pose, behind which lie innate aggressions or regressions known to both predator and prey, yet only dominant under certain conditions. Described as someone who “bows like a pocket knife folding,” a diminutive reference to size but suggestive of cutting ability, concealment, and perhaps an outwardly respectable manner, the Japanese tourist is the monster figure, one who occupies a steadily engulfing textual space as the story progresses.<sup>108</sup> Undergoing the opposite process are two Māori larrikins who become miniaturised by the end, but start out in a position of confidence, expecting to enrich themselves at the drunken tourist’s expense with an easy game of cards. As the game progresses, their plan bears fruit: the Japanese steadily loses his money, all the while appearing too inebriated to comprehend his position, until only his briefcase remains as collateral. One might read into the exchange a microcosm of how international trade and business agreements play out when the Japanese are involved – that is, as a succession of incentives leading up to an impoverished adjournment – but Hulme is more concerned with the nature of her creation than with ties to current affairs. We see the monster’s purpose

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<sup>107</sup> Patrick Evans, *The Long Forgetting: Post-Colonial Literary Culture in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2007), p. 16.

<sup>108</sup> Keri Hulme, “Kaibutsu-San,” *Landfall* 39, no. 4 (1985): p. 460. The knife image can also be found in American imagery associated with African Americans. See Janette Faulkner and Robbin Henderson, *Ethnic Notions: Black Images in the White Mind* (Berkeley: Berkeley Art Center, 2000), p. 57.

at the end when he quickly wins the game, having goaded his hapless opponents into gambling everything they have, including their bodies and selves:

“Keep the money,” he says. His face is becoming leaner. “Keep your patches and gear.” He has stopped sweating. “You can even keep the glasses.” He points the handle of his bag at us. We are sitting stunned, mouths O, Mi’s hands limp as though the life has gone from them. “I only want everything from you.” Somehow his teeth are more pointed than before. There is a flash and click like someone took a photograph. Immediately I feel something essential, vital, drain out of my belly, and Mi feels it too because he screams and the cards spray out of his hands.

[...]

The Teeth smiles suavely, one last time.

“So sorry,” he says, and is back among the Friday night crowd and lost.<sup>109</sup>

If there is a moral here, it lies in the dispossession avarice leads to, and yet the potential universality is hardly as significant as the ethnic-national identities of the characters concerned. Hulme reduces the Japanese to the three principal icons of briefcase-camera-teeth, each one of which comprises a means to absorb or contain, thereby signalling that the roles of predator and prey have undergone a reversal. But the meaning of these images stretches outside the narrative, triggering associative values and interlinking with historical nodal points. That the camera, beloved of tourist groups especially, should act as trapdoor to a portable prison suggests a tourist gaze in operation, one that captures people’s essence and leaves a hollow shell in its wake. John Urry intended ‘the gaze’ as a term that gets to the bottom of what forces, social, cultural, economic, or otherwise, impel societies to gaze upon others and how these reflect upon society back home, but Hulme’s text figures New

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109 Hulme, “Kaibutsu-San,” p. 463-4.

Zealanders as objects, not practitioners of the gaze.<sup>110</sup> Thus we cannot approach the text as a means to understand New Zealand society in any comprehensive sense, and the tourist gaze stands only for the acknowledgement that host societies undergo alterations at the behest of those who approach them as objects of consumption. Hulme's story manifests an awareness of this trend and conjoins it to a set of images with a long bloodline, foremost among them being the portrayal of Japanese as vampires, a publicly-endorsed trope during the Pacific War, as evidenced in the 'Tokio Kid' series of American posters, each one of which featured a Japanese face sporting protuberant incisors and pointed ears. The tourist-vampire's highly ironical apology is also a throwback to the conniving, smooth-tongued, frequently bespectacled Japanese villain figures of monochrome Hollywood cinema, and more specifically to the Mr. Moto series created by American author John P. Marquand.<sup>111</sup> What emerges, 'disinterred,' as it were, from the vault of undead wartime ideologies is therefore nothing more than a means to dehumanise the Japanese, and indeed the story could sit just as well in a 1940's context.<sup>112</sup> Only a persistent strain of anti-tourist sentiment saves Hulme's work from a charge of anachronistic pastiche, if barely, since it covers the

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110 John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2001), p. 2.

111 As a literary creation, Mr. Moto predated the United States' involvement in World War II by some six years, but even his earliest appearance contained a sinister foreboding that anticipated the coming conflict. Writing of this aspect in *Your Turn, Mr. Moto* (1935), Laurence Goldstein states that "The political reflex even of the sophisticated hero of Marquand's novel – and his sophistication is clearly on view in his elegant phrasing and sinuous syntax – is to retreat into the kind of tribal solidarity that constitutes pre-combat behavior. From this moment of the first novel in the series, Mr. Moto becomes a villain, not just a diplomat from a rival nation, and the violent (if necessary) destruction of his imperial power becomes the chief goal of an enlightened American foreign policy." So powerful was this predictive quality that in 1941 American servicemen routinely referred to the Japanese as 'Mr. Moto,' though this practice did not last through to the end of the war and, indeed, the Mr. Moto series petered out in the postwar years, although Little, Brown and Company republished the novels in the mid-1980's. See Laurence Goldstein, "'The Imagination Problem': Winfield Townley Scott and the American Wars," *War, Literature, and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 14, no. 1-2 (2002): p. 64.; William White, "Mr. Marquand's 'Mr. Moto'," *American Speech* 23(1948).

112 Hulme is not the only New Zealander to draw upon vampirism as a means to demonise the Japanese. New Zealand-born author and screenwriter David Bishop did much the same in his novel, *Fiends of the Rising Sun* (2007), though his story is part of a series that likewise figures Germans as vampires, and he was anticipated by British author Brian Lumley's portrayal of Soviets as vampires in his novel, *Necroscope* (1986).

essential unpleasantness of her Japanophobia with a veneer of genteel distaste for tourist behaviour, allowing readers to give her the benefit of the doubt, should they so wish.<sup>113</sup>

Somewhat less vindictive is Vivienne Plumb's "The Wife Who Spoke Japanese in her Sleep," which likewise involves a 'takeover bid,' albeit of an epidemiological rather than a technological turn. Here the possession is voluntary and gradual rather than swift and coerced, and examines the 'other within' (domestically and psychologically) rather than a soul-gathering confidence man without. Addressing the improbability of gothic themes situated within New Zealand houses, film researcher Misha Kavka asserts that "the gothic can be brought home here, too, in any number of Kiwi visual and literary tropes where an undead history meets unsuccessful efforts at its repression. Indeed, however short our past, it seems curiously prone to gothic metaphorisation; however short our history, it seems particularly undead."<sup>114</sup> As with most allusions to dark histories in the *Gothic NZ* (2006) volume, Kavka is concerned with Māori-Pākehā relations in colonial times, but her observation as to the failure of Kiwi households to repress history does as well for the leftover relics of Pacific War propaganda and, in Plumb's case, the exhumation of an early trope of Cold War fiction, namely the covert alien parasite whose unstoppable reproduction stands analogously for assumptions underpinning the Red Scare in the United States. In the epigraph to this chapter we see how an intrusive, collusive, blanketing foreign presence, first emergent in suburban backwaters, warps and usurps landmarks and people until the

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113 It is worth noting that anti-tourist and Orientalist discourse sometimes employ the same vocabularies, blurring the boundaries between the two. As Mike Crang puts it, "Mass tourists are frequently treated as a homogeneous mass, who are often metaphorically described like animals as hordes, herds or flocks, making them sound almost like a separate species." See Crang, "Travel/Tourism," p. 39. Of additional importance, where Keri Hulme is concerned, was her award of the 1985 Booker Prize for her novel, *The Bone People* (1984), which came just two months before the publication of "Kaibutsu-San" and may thus have created a smokescreen that, set alongside the quiet rumblings of Japanophobic sentiment in larger New Zealand society, fostered an indulgent attitude to the author's politics.

114 Misha Kavka, "Out of the Kitchen Sink," in *Gothic NZ: The Darker Side of Kiwi Culture*, ed. Misha Kavka, Jennifer Lawn, and Mary Paul (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006), p. 57.



world of the familiar becomes twisted into a grotesque facsimile. The 'body snatchers' of the original paradigm infiltrate their new environs in gradual, measured steps, ensuring that those who undergo the compulsory metamorphosis resemble their original selves almost perfectly. Textually, this 'brainwashing' process takes place with only minimal reference to supernatural powers, it being important to retain the human dimension as much as possible, the better to convince readers of the plausibility of the scenario. Life remains quiet, pleasant, and predictable, features that make clear how ill-prepared communities are to cope with the opening of an alien frontier in their own backyards. Plumb's short story is a condensed version of the same state of affairs, coalescing around the figure of Honey, a bland and vacuous housewife, who discovers that she harbours another self, that of a Japanese dowager whose nocturnal skills emerge as prophecy and converse. Each self remains contentedly ensconced in the Kiwi household, which thus becomes an instrument to measure the course of the changes and their effect upon Honey's husband, Howard. These emerge after Honey speaks in Japanese to an interpreter:

"Did I do it?" she asks.

"Yes," says Howard. His voice is low. "They were very pleased. You were very successful. Miss Florica thinks you could help even more people."

"I see," says Honey. "Tell her she can have thirty percent."

She turns and goes back to the bedroom. Howard comes inside. He's surprised. Honey seems so different, so business-minded, it's not like her. He frowns at the lock, pulls the chain across and slips it into its tiny slot. Tomorrow he'll ring Miss Florica and make her an offer.<sup>115</sup>

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115 Vivienne Plumb, "The Wife Who Spoke Japanese in her Sleep," in *The Wife Who Spoke Japanese in her Sleep* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 1993).

Unlike the body snatchers, whose ‘snatching’ carries with it a loss of any motivation to work or study, Honey becomes enhanced, supercharged we might say, by her takeover. She is more productive, useful, and certainly more interesting, but, like the body snatchers, the process flushes her out emotionally and renders human relationships purely functional. Howard is the casualty here, representing as he does the unpretentious, unsophisticated Kiwi ‘bloke’ who, bewildered but curious, lets events take their course. The forces that power Honey’s changes are never revealed, but whether a pathology, reincarnation, or alien intervention matters less than the discord that arises when the alter ego assumes the dominant position. As with “Kaibutsu-San,” cash flow serves as a digestive aid, facilitating the consumption of the New Zealand ‘vessel’ until it all but disappears from view, and again the ending takes on a grim aspect when Howard, no longer cost-effective, is absorbed into the foundations of a Japanese garden. Though the results are various, the Japanese component thereby overlays itself upon both characters, consigning them to the rubbish bin of the past.

Hulme and Plumb are both concerned with the passage of bodies, symbolically associated with the health of the nation, into depersonalised, excommunicated realms that render normal lines of communication unrecoverable. The ‘alien’ Japanese body controls this mutation process, benefitting from the final ‘possession,’ and conducting business with an efficiency that leaves no question as to its jurisdiction. Only the deployment of an alternative system of knowledge, negating or going beyond the monster-alien’s mastery over commerce and possession, offered a way for Kiwi ‘hosts’ to survive the encounter.<sup>116</sup>

Such is the route Auckland-based author Ian Middleton adopts in *Reiko*, a novel that stands

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<sup>116</sup> The quest for an antidote to a ‘viral’ foreign aggregate is traceable in literary form to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), in which the vampire represents a challenge to the Darwinian knowledge system and can only be defeated by the passage of information. See Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 45-62.

as a companion to two prior publications, *Faces of Hachiko* (1984) and *Sunflower* (1986), each of which is structured similarly, though *Reiko* stands apart in that it balances the journey of a New Zealander to Japan with a Japanese honeymoon couple going the opposite way. Middleton has the distinction of being the first New Zealand writer to take Japan as both topic and setting, and despite a few telltale weaknesses common to expatriates who find the shock of cultural differences sufficient literary inspiration in itself, his novel avoids any overt expressions of Japanophobia and also manages to rescind the mutation process by throwing it into reverse.<sup>117</sup> The Japan-based component accomplishes this by portraying the Japanese as victims rather than beneficiaries of their nation's work ethic, which leaves them lost in a built environment whose hold over them supersedes human relations. Thus Satomi, a disaffected housewife, confesses an outright fear of the Tokyo landscape; Kazuo, a student, sees only a dizzying speed about him; and Reiko's mother holds up the hope of 'normal' marriage for her son as the one remaining point of stability in her life. The balm to this chaotic world is Andrew Spellman, a New Zealander who, as his name suggests, possesses the magic that the corporate world lacks.<sup>118</sup> Not a spell-caster so much as a lifter of spells, he sees through the façade of Japanese capitalism and disturbs the people he meets with his endearing 'naturalness.' Middleton matches this figure with Reiko, a woman of impulsive, emotive qualities, latently in touch with her instinctive self, and the continuous cross-referencing between the natural and the sexual that underpins their romance has the effect of conflating these qualities, so that the invocation of one automatically implies the other. Through this strategy, romance becomes a path that leads to a critique of the

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117 For a cursory examination of the handicaps budding expatriate writers face in Japan, see Donald Richie, "Introduction," in *The Broken Bridge*, ed. Suzanne Kamata (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1997).

118 Kevin Ireland, "Alienated by the Old and the New," *The Dominion*, 19 May 1990.

modern, as we see when Spellman finds himself alienated by the Tokyo landscape: "On the other side, as Andrew took the narrow street toward Shibuya, his thoughts turned to Reiko, unchanging Reiko... Her image banished in a flash the tensions, the crowding steel and concrete, the emissions. He felt flesh and blood again, alert. He moved on freely down the narrow street."<sup>119</sup>

Built into such passages is a dualism that contrasts work/urbanisation/absence with romance/pastoralism/presence, a rigid structure that has led at least one scholar to dismiss the work as too predictable.<sup>120</sup> The dualistic component is indeed likely to disappoint, particularly if one hopes to find something in Spellman besides a conceited valorisation of New Zealand identity. We have seen, however, that the economic muscle of Japan and the confidence with which its corporations acquired overseas assets brought increased attention from the American media, and New Zealanders also turned their eyes to Japan, fearfully, as in Hulme and Plumb's portrayals, but also with anticipation that the encounter could provide important business models.<sup>121</sup> The novel's dualism is steeped in – or rather, resistant to – the corporate discourse of its time, and we need to see in it not so much a manifestation of New Zealand triumphalism, but rather a hurried retreat to familiar cultural ground in the face of unattainable economic ideals. This is an offshoot of, or perhaps a deviation from, what literary scholar Christopher Connery has termed 'Pacific Rim Discourse,' which describes a way in which Americans accepted the rise of a third power in a hitherto bipolar world through imagining a spatially abstract, nonlinear 'Rim' that transcended teleological definitions of socio-economic development. As Connery puts it,

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119 Ian Middleton, *Reiko* (Wellington: Moana Press, 1990), p. 55.

120 Lawrence Jones, "Some Other Countries: The Novels of 1990," *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 12(1994): p. 71.

121 See Gordon Campbell, "They are driven," *NZ Listener*, 19 September 1987.

“The Rim was a perfect image for a centeredness with no central power.”<sup>122</sup> That Japan and the United States were modern nations was never in dispute, but the degree to which the development of one surpassed the other led to the need for Pacific Rim Discourse as an ideological panacea. In New Zealand’s case, by contrast, comparative economic or industrial measurement led to a sense of laggardly, even embarrassing underperformance. Kazuo bluntly advances this conclusion: “Your country is sleeping. It lets the rest of the world pass it by. I never saw so many old cars on the roads, so many people moving about so slowly.”<sup>123</sup> Rather than situating New Zealand society alongside Japan’s, which would necessitate a retort, Middleton imagines a condition of satisfactory underdevelopment within New Zealand and has fun with the oxymoron this presents to Kazuo. This ideology, then, is not anti-teleological in the way that Pacific Rim Discourse is, but rather anti-modern – that is, it does not harness two or more countries together as frontrunners, instead preferring to grant Japanese society its lead position while questioning the benefits to such an extent that the poles within the teleology become reversed.

If anti-modernism comprises a counteractant sufficient to upend Japanese pretensions to superiority, its epicentre necessitated a stock of imagery outside the nexus of urban living and personal enrichment. Halfway through the novel Middleton alludes to this source with a fable of a Japanese child who, unable to speak properly, discovers his voice in a New Zealand forest, a place of magical curative properties.<sup>124</sup> The idea of forest and wilderness standing against the conjoined worlds of urbanism and material acquisition is hardly unique to New Zealand, but perhaps only there is the dyad stretched to encompass

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122 Christopher L. Connery, “Pacific Rim Discourse: The U.S. Global Imaginary in the Late Cold War Years,” *boundary 2* 21, no. 1 (1994): p. 34.

123 Middleton, *Reiko*, p. 62.

124 *Ibid.*, p. 69-71.

an entire country (New Zealand as 'untouched'), so that even city-dwellers can imagine their land as unspoiled.<sup>125</sup> Middleton shows some awareness of this fallacy, but is not averse to wielding it as a means to portray the Japanese as hopelessly tarnished, an idea that emerges when a honeymoon couple play out the rediscovery of their natural, earthbound selves within New Zealand forests.<sup>126</sup> New Zealand thereby becomes a site of restoration rather than possession, the ordinarily problematised tourists refashioned as harmless nature lovers whose observations confirm Japan's desperate position:

If a comparison could be made, Hisao thought, between the destinies of people in Japan and the farm animals in New Zealand, the main difference would be that in Japan when the workers were no longer of use they were pensioned off; the sheep on the other hand, at the end of their productive life, were consumed as food. Choice hardly entered the picture, so in either case it was much the same in the end.

[...]

Standing there holding Mutsumi's hand, Hisao felt the surge of the blood in his veins, the cold wet sand sucking at his feet. He looked again to the horizon, toward the place where this moment was born. He felt tiny, humble and, at the same instant, almost unbearably aware of the stripped-down self and its link with sea and sky.<sup>127</sup>

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125 Claudia Bell, *Inventing New Zealand: everyday myths of Pakeha identity* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 34.

126 Middleton may have been on to something in his depictions of Japanese who venture outside cities in the hope of getting in touch with lost identities. Rural locations in Japan, such as the National Park of Shima Peninsula in Mie Prefecture, are marketed in ways that emphasise a rustic, pre-Meiji Japanese culture. All Middleton does is to fictively extend the radius of Japanese tourism to include New Zealand and a problem finds its tailor-made solution – tailor made, that is, because New Zealand has long been figured as a 'clean, green' paradise. Whether or not New Zealand actually catered to Japanese tourists in this fashion is beside the point, for Middleton is concerned only with turning tourism – one of the most visible signs of Japanese wealth – into a sign of crisis in Japanese identity. For information relating to Japanese tourists and their search for a pre- or anti-modern Japan, see D. P. Martinez, "Tourism and the *ama*: the search for a real Japan," in *Unwrapping Japan: Society and Culture in Anthropological Perspective*, ed. Eyal Ben-Ari, Brian Moeran, and James Valentine (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

127 Middleton, *Reiko*, p. 144-6.

The spectacle of a solitary Japanese couple drawing wisdom in and from the New Zealand wilderness may appear somewhat peculiar, especially when contrasted with Hulme's vampire tourist, but in fact the landscape, traditionally a means by which settlers naturalised their place in an 'empty' land, remains a sublime construction familiar through the earliest travel writing.<sup>128</sup> The Japanese, in other words, see as (white) New Zealanders see, and even 'go bush' (avoiding larger groups of tourists and venturing 'off the beaten track'), following in the footsteps of another established tradition in Pākehā literature.<sup>129</sup> Rather than 'capturing' land and people with cameras and prophecy, the honeymooners are themselves caught up in an established mode of perception that tames and personalises them on terms preferential to New Zealand anti-modernism. Their comments on the landscape are one route toward this end, and another way emerges when they start belittling their fellow countrymen and snubbing their vulgar practices. Preferring to style themselves 'travellers,' they deploy a longstanding dichotomy that emphasises hard-won knowledge over the indulgent whimsy of tourism.<sup>130</sup> Hisao and Mutsumi are intent on learning something, and in the process they provide reassurance to readers that New Zealand's national identity, stamped onto and drawn from the natural world, is sufficient to put the Japanese 'in their place.' In short, the Japanese become complicit in propagating an ideology that reinforces New Zealand's national self-image, and while the result is not Japanophobic in the strictest meaning of the word, the hoops Middleton makes his characters jump through arc around the same topic that Hulme and Plumb portrayed more directly.

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128 Linda Dyson, "The Construction and Reconstruction of 'Whiteness' in New Zealand," *British Review of New Zealand Studies* 9(1996): p. 57.

129 Kirstie Ross, *Going Bush: New Zealanders and Nature in the Twentieth Century* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), p. 1.

130 Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), p. 10.

## America 'Incorporated'

Without a technological industry likely to warrant large-scale foreign takeovers, New Zealanders turned to (or perhaps 'turned on' describes it better) Japanese tourists, imagining them as something more ominous than indifferent passers-by: as ravenous private collectors on the lookout for easy pickings, or trans-dimensional pathogens that disturb traditional domestic life. They were not a 'capitalist vanguard' acting on behalf of some larger power with a future gambit in mind, but radical free agents, unpredictable, self-serving, and disempowering.<sup>131</sup> Trespassers such as these were never, and *could never be* prosecuted. More conventional was the behaviour of Japanese as portrayed in the literature of heavily industrialised countries like Australia and the United States, where businessmen were cast as 'invaders' acting on behalf of large, corporate entities intent on weakening the nation.<sup>132</sup> American fiction writers in particular had no difficulty sourcing material drawn from business news media, as the rhetoric of newspapers in the 1980's continuously deployed the Pacific War as analogous to the current state of economic relations between the two countries.<sup>133</sup> The market was hungry for any sensationalist publications that sought to condense trade frictions into an 'us-them' Mexican standoff, whittled down to the individual level. Sparing in characterisation but fulsome in corporate references, Michael Crichton's detective story, *Rising Sun*, ticked all the right boxes and went on to become an instant bestseller.

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131 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 146.

132 Megumi Kato, *Narrating the Other: Australian Literary Perceptions of Japan* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2008), p. 169. The closest New Zealand came to a thriller of this type was Ian Richards' self-published manuscript, *Kuromaku*, a story in which a British expatriate in Japan tries to outwit the nebulous intentions of the corporate world. See Ian Richards, *Kuromaku* (Auckland: Lonely Arts Publishing, 2005).

133 Susan D. Moeller, "Pictures of the enemy: Fifty years of images of Japan in the American press, 1941-1992," *Journal of American Culture* 19, no. 1 (1996): p. 36.



Ostensibly, the 'detection' process is geared toward discovering the killer of a young woman, found sprawled across the boardroom table of a Japanese corporation during a party. On the case are two officers, Peter Smith and John Connor, assigned to the Los Angeles Police Department's Special Services Division, which handles politically sensitive affairs related to foreign nationals. As the senior and more experienced of the two, Connor assumes the mantle of educating his subordinate in things Japanese, a lofty responsibility that provides him the narrative license to delve into industry, transport, law, language, food, sex, politics, economics, and sport, all in the most universal terms. Such is the breadth of the topics in question that the real detective work, it soon becomes clear, has more to do with uncovering the Achilles' heel in American trade practices or, more dastardly still, the arrows (legal or illegal, public or private) that the Japanese shoot into it. Alongside this, finding the murderer becomes an almost incidental pursuit, though the youth and gender of the murder victim exacerbates the righteous indignation, and provides an obviously symbolic reference to the helplessness of U.S. society.<sup>134</sup> Although the novel draws upon a comprehensive body of published material dedicated to Japan-U.S. relations, in fact book-length responses to Japan's 'economic miracle' had split between those who recognised an opportunity to exchange helpful lessons and those who preferred the more haunting image of an enemy risen from the grave.<sup>135</sup> A bibliography of 'principal' and 'other' sources located at the end of Crichton's novel reveals his awareness of the division, but the unfolding narrative is less a measured synthesis of approaches than a jumble of piecemeal notations, erring decisively toward an alarmist stance. Crichton's debt to scholarly and

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134 Heather J. Hicks, *The Culture of Soft Work: Labor, Gender, and Race in Postmodern American Narrative*, ed. Linda Wagner-Martin, *American Literature Readings in the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 149.

135 Barry Smart, "(Mis)Understanding Japan," *Theory Culture Society* 13, no. 3 (1996): p. 184.

journalistic research has led Asian Studies scholars Jacob Raz and Aviad E. Raz to see in John Connor the role of the Japanologist, 'mediating' the quixotic Japanese society from the vantage point of the perpetual outsider, one who nourishes a poorly-concealed, sentimental longing to integrate.<sup>136</sup> Such a reading makes much of the unbroken link between the novel's source material and its summary delivery in the body of the text, which in many instances is undeniable and transparent, and does justice to Connor as a character. But it overlooks his place as a single source among many others within a field of knowledge encompassing state representatives, ethnic minorities, foreign nationals, white collar professionals, and the downtrodden social classes, as well as nonhuman actors such as electronic technologies, corporate structures, and commonplace household settings. No one article or figure monopolises our attention, nor do they proceed in a strictly-ordered procession. Instead, the way in which meanings emerge from a given scene draws upon an entangled, knotted, altogether messy assortment of signs and signifiers. Rather than figuring Connor as Japanologist, therefore, it may be more apposite to imagine him as a tour guide, one who gestures toward meanings in particular places and situations without necessarily having the final word on what we take away. Describing a similar process, sociologist Chris Rojek conceives the interaction between source materials provided at tourist sites, and those taken there by tourists themselves (in terms of preconceived notions traceable, in turn, to still more diverse origins) in terms of 'files':

In trying to explain the complex feelings that one experiences in tourism it is helpful to think in terms of the dragging of elements from files. The term dragging refers to the combination of elements from separate files of representation to create a new value.

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136 Jacob Raz and Aviad E. Raz, "'America' Meets 'Japan': A Journey for Real between Two Imaginaries," *Theory Culture Society* 13, no. 3 (1996): p. 156.

Selections of images, symbols and associations are drawn from representational files to create new values for the sight.<sup>137</sup>

All but preaching from a lectern, Connor comprises the central 'filing cabinet,' a resource-rich but monolithic presence whose powers of contextualisation overcrowd their object questions, though at various times other characters supplement or take over the knowledge transfer process, as when Smith visits Ken Shubik at the *Los Angeles Times*, or Ron Levine at the American Financial Network, or Phillip Sanders at the University of Southern California. Indistinguishable from one another, these figures are subcontracted tour guides, picking up where Connor leaves off and ushering Smith to less familiar sites of interest. The theme of the tour, if we could give it a name, is to witness the decline and fall of the American dream, courtesy of a Japanese wrecking ball. In most cases the spectacle is imagined as a *fait accompli*, and scenes of social and institutional decline bear this out, such as the American university, underfunded or in the pocket of Japanese donors; or the would-be home owner, unable to gain a foothold in an inflated property market; or American newspapers, unable to exercise free speech for fear of causing offence.<sup>138</sup>

As chief tour guide, Connor reintroduces Smith to a land he no longer recognises, leaving him in a giddy reverie of incredulity made worse by the necessity of conducting the investigation over a mere two days. The time constraint renders opportunities for contemplation few and far between, and also leaves the active subtext (that the United States is not in its rightful condition) unquestioned. In any event, neither Smith nor the

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137 Chris Rojek, "Indexing, Dragging and the Social Construction of Tourist Sights," in *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, ed. Chris Rojek and John Urry (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 54.

138 Ian Buruma also draws attention to these aspects of *Rising Sun*, suggesting that portrayals of American institutions under the control of foreign powers bear some similarity to classic anti-Semitic works. See Ian Buruma, "Wake Up, America," in *The Missionary and the Libertine: Love and War in East and West*, ed. Ian Buruma (New York: Vintage, 2001), p. 275.

reader are assumed to need much persuading, it being sufficient to observe that the national image does not match the national condition, and thence to postulate a causal agent. For the tourist, the avoidance of fixation is a signature feature of the postmodern, according to sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, who states that “The overall result is the *fragmentation* of time into *episodes*, each one cut from its past and from its future, each one self-enclosed and self-contained. Life is no longer a river, but a collection of ponds and pools.”<sup>139</sup> Bauman’s description serves as well for the structure of *Rising Sun*, in which no one episode is an especially incisive window into contemporary society, the ‘Japanese mind,’ or the state of the American economy: Smith can take or leave each one as it suits. But this is not to say that he is left comfortable on this whirlwind tour, for it is the tour that determines what comes next – that is, Smith and Connor have little say in shaping the course of events, finding more often that it is ‘events’ (mostly Japanese-orchestrated) that influence them. The opening of the investigation establishes this trend, when the Japanese obstruct the police investigation to the extent that Smith seeks comfort in the absoluteness of a corpse, noting that “it’s an unavoidable fact, like a rock in the road that makes all the traffic go around it.”<sup>140</sup> Only death, not the detective work that follows it, can compel the Japanese to behave differently, Smith realises, but the Japanese can compel the detectives to go out of their way at any time. This comes across most obviously when the mayor’s press secretary, having received complaints from the Japanese, urges Smith to be more circumspect; or when the police chief hastens the investigation along; or when university equipment required for viewing high density film is suddenly shut down; or when Smith’s

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139 Zygmunt Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity,” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: SAGE, 1996), p. 25.

140 Michael Crichton, *Rising Sun* (New York: Arrow Books, 1992), p. 40.

ex-wife throws allegations of sexual misconduct against him. Crichton deliberately leaves out the agent behind such manoeuvrings, so that Smith is left to 'drag' files of knowledge in order to generate meaning even as the story swiftly progresses onto still another episode. The effect is to provide a sense, not a whole picture, of the scale of Japanese power in the United States.<sup>141</sup>

Connor's tour-guide prattle fills in the blanks, spoon-feeding the narrative a diet of reconstituted current affairs so unremitting that the novel's style almost collapses in on itself, weighed down by didacticism.<sup>142</sup> Had Crichton left it at that, the result would be little more than an abridged gazette masquerading as fiction, but two other discursive strains make their way into the work as handmaidens to the contemporary polemic. We see the first of these when Connor mentions that "there is a shadow world – here in Los Angeles, in Honolulu, in New York. Most of the time you're never aware of it. We live in our American streets, and we never notice that right alongside our world is a second world. Very discreet, very private."<sup>143</sup> The insidiously purposeful yet intriguingly closeted subculture Crichton unveils carries a literary pedigree traceable at least as far back as the turn of the last century, when the segregation of Chinese expatriate communities, part voluntary and part forced, provoked a series of fictionalised responses, such as British author Thomas Burke's *Limehouse Nights* (1917), notorious for its portrayals of poverty and interracial relationships. Depictions of non-white immigrant communities as both ghettoised and lusting after white women have tended to pay little mind to the ethnic-national differences that separate one

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141 The theme of political corruption acting as a 'Trojan horse' in the service of hostile 'alien' powers is as old as the first invasion novels. For a literary history, see David Walker, "Godless heathen: China in the American Bestseller," in *East by South: China in the Australasian imagination*, ed. Charles Ferrall, Paul Millar, and Keren Smith (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005).

142 Liam Connell, "Business as Usual: The Image of the Corporation in the Cultures of Globalisation," in *Globalisation and its Discontents: Writing the Global Culture*, ed. Stan Smith (Woodbridge: D.S.Brewer, 2006), p. 174.

143 Crichton, *Rising Sun*, p. 71.

minority community, spatially or temporally, from another. What the Chinese were seen to have been doing yesterday, the Japanese would be doing tomorrow. Thus it is no surprise to find that Crichton's reference comes at a point when Connor and Smith are about to interview a white prostitute whose clientele are mainly Japanese.<sup>144</sup> Though she is the pampered resident of a luxury apartment building, and not in some Chinatown hideaway, the difference is one of degree rather than kind. The parent of this style of writing is British author Sax Rohmer, whose fictional syndicate, the Si-Fan, has provided a ready model for imagined underground organisations ever since its first appearance in the Fu Manchu novels.<sup>145</sup> Rohmer's Si-Fan was a subnational, indeed nationally subversive, entity organised as a response to foreign imperialism in China but seeking its solution in reciprocal efforts to dominate Britain, its empire, and the world.<sup>146</sup> Crichton does not resurrect the figure of an autocrat at the helm, but a good number of other features are retained: the sense, for example, of the enemy's mastery of one's own social, political, and economic systems; the presence of would-be allies who have been corrupted and rendered vassals of the foreign; a community of ethnic migrants disinterested in the habits and habitats that prefigured their arrival; and an undercurrent of sexual tension that figures the foreign as predator. Features such as these are readily compatible with U.S. political trends that latch onto an enemy image in order to justify a countersubversive discourse, something political scientist Michael Paul Rogin described as 'demonology': "Fearing chaos and secret penetration, the

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144 David Ehrenstein, "War Business," *Sight and Sound* 3, no. 10 (1993): p. 12.

145 The Fu Manchu series often employed scenes of captivity, as Timothy Kendall has noted. See Timothy Kendall, "'Torture-and Loving Care-in China': Captivity and the Fiction of Oriental Despotism," in *Sinographies: Writing China*, ed. Eric Hayot, Haun Saussy, and Steven Yao (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

146 Ironically, Rohmer conceived his work at a time when the Boxer Rebellion was still a living memory in Britain and his scenario of a sinister foreign presence in London is to reverse the roles of the British and Chinese at the turn of the century. For an examination of how the British colonisation of China featured in the Fu Manchu novels, see David Shih, "The Color of Fu-Manchu: Orientalist Method in the Novels of Sax Rohmer," *Journal of Popular Culture* 42, no. 2 (2009): p. 308-9.

countersubversive interprets local initiatives as signs of alien power. Discrete individuals and groups become, in the countersubversive imagination, members of a single political body directed by its head."<sup>147</sup> Significantly, Crichton never describes the objective of the Japanese in any singular term, preferring an oblique collection of scenarios processed ('on procession,' we might say) through the novel's episodic structure and requiring the reader to 'drag' after a few subtly, and not-so-subtly prompted 'files.'<sup>148</sup> No matter where they happen to be, the Japanese are up to no good. The appropriate response to this threat deploys a second discourse and comes through most strongly in the closing paragraph:

I walked into my daughter's room. I looked at her crib, and her covers with the elephants sewn on it. I thought of the way she slept, so trustingly, lying on her back, her arms thrown over her head. I thought of the way she trusted me to make her world for her now. And I thought of the world that she would grow into. And as I started to make her bed, I felt uneasy in my heart.<sup>149</sup>

Corruption of the young is the ultimate menace and, as in the case of the murder victim, the nation is symbolically interwoven into the image of the innocent child, a 'sleeping beauty' whose future must involve a fork in the road, namely a rejuvenated sense of moral guardianship on one side, or a lethargic state of carelessness on the other. At various points in the text, the United States is described as being 'asleep,' a coded reference to Pearl

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<sup>147</sup> Michael Paul Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. xiii.

<sup>148</sup> One possible reason why Crichton attributes no single motivation to the Japanese is that the American media had already constructed a homogenised, apocalyptic identity in them that resurrected fears of an Oriental master race. See M. J. Heale, "Anatomy of a Scare: Yellow Peril Politics in America, 1980–1993," *Journal of American Studies* 43, no. 1 (2009): p. 38.

<sup>149</sup> Crichton, *Rising Sun*, p. 398.

Harbor that serves as a clarion call for political and civic activism.<sup>150</sup> We are left with no doubt, therefore, as to the right response in preserving the sanctity of the national body.

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Questions as to why Americans reacted so defensively to the acquisition of domestic industries during the 1980's have tended toward banal economic iterations: the Japanese simply bought too many U.S. companies, which left American workers and patriots feeling dejected, or suspicious, or annoyed, or scared, etcetera. Thus it stands to reason, following this train of thought, that other foreign powers would arouse equal chagrin if they went on a similar spending spree, and that cultural determinants had little enough to do with the final picture. Japan was momentarily strong, American was momentarily weak, and we don't need to look further than that. The simplest way of refuting this flippant reductionism is to call attention to the greater investment made by European industries in the United States during the 1980's, and then ask why Japan in particular should have carried the burden of such disdain.<sup>151</sup> This chapter has taken a different, more hypothetical approach, arguing for the persistence of antipathies toward Japan irrespective of economic activity. One might frame this analysis in comparative dialogic terms: How would New Zealanders have responded had a corporation (say, on a scale comparable to that of CBS Records in 1988) been located in their country – of such size, that is, as to make the prospect of Japanese ownership a topic of national concern? Conversely, how would Americans have felt had their country possessed no large industry at all, leaving only tourism as a likely mode of large-scale contact? Grossly out of step with the views that Americans and New

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150 Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, p. 67.

151 This is a crucial observation, cited especially in Asian American Studies publications. Brian Locke makes use of it, for example, in his critique of the film version of *Rising Sun*. See Brian Locke, *Racial Stigma on the Hollywood Screen from World War II to the Present: The Orientalist Buddy Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 83.



Zealanders typically have of their respective countries, these counterfactuals may be difficult to envisage.<sup>152</sup> But that is hardly the point. The fiction writings observed in this chapter reveal that, whether the industrial base of the host society was agrarian or technological, Japanese visitors became the objects of a literary response that demonised them or, in the case of Ian Middleton's writing, dressed them up as Europeanised adventurers in order to render their identity more acceptable. We can therefore respond to the questions with a reasonable degree of confidence and say that, in all probability, the New Zealand literary response would have differed very little from that of the United States; nor would American reactions have deviated much from their New Zealand counterparts had that country been little more than sparsely populated prairies and virgin forest.

The critical axis for both national populations hinged upon a set of fixed ideas about the Japanese people, which, as the last chapter illustrated, did not grant self-realisation as a likely possibility. The Japanese of the war years were automatons, anti-individualists who gained nothing from the combat experience except a chance to sacrifice themselves. In the intervening decades between the end of the Pacific War and the 1980's, Americans came to look fondly upon their wards, less because of any newfound appreciation for Japanese culture than the pleasing absence of competition, military or economic. Come the rise of 'Japan inc.' in subsequent years, however, and the old ideas of Japanese as tricky, underhand masters (or monsters) of betrayal came back into play. One does not need to dig much deeper than this to explain the extreme nature of the literary reactions in the United States and New Zealand. Writers like Crichton took on the role of soothsayers, muttering incantations that dug up the restive demons of the past, proving above all else that it was

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152 Matthew Hirshberg, "What New Zealand Means to New Zealanders: Word Association Studies" (paper presented at the Joint Conference of the Australasian Political Science Association and the European Union Studies Association of New Zealand, Christchurch, 1998).

not necessary to set one's story within the Pacific War in order to draw upon it as a storehouse of imagery and symbolism. These antipathetic writings, never wholly separate from a substratum of economic determinants and seemingly hamstrung by an over-dependency on contemporaneous polemics, were destined to fade away after the bursting of Japan's economic bubble in 1991. Unlike the combat novels of the last chapter, they left no residue of impressions or ideas that could serve as inspiration for later writers and our purpose here has been a humble one: namely, to place them as a short-lived symptom of a long-term trend, in which Pacific War ideologies serve as a fallback position to which writers resort if they come up short for new ways to talk about Japanese. This trend acts to moderate our expectations of those writers who, at the turn of the twentieth-century, return to less commonly known events of the Pacific War while attempting to construct for themselves a subjectivity outside the ideologies of the war itself. The lesson of the 1980's is that we need to approach this project sceptically, even as we grant writers their need to resurrect hitherto marginal stories. In the next couple of chapters, focusing on prisoners of war and Japanese minorities, respectively, we shall see how far they proceed in their endeavours.

## Chapter 3

### Penned Up Enemies

It seemed to me just as wrong for us now to condemn Hara under a law which had never been his, of which he had never even heard, as he and his masters had been to punish and kill us for transgressions of the code of Japan that was not ours.

Laurens van der Post, *The Seed and the Sower*, (p. 34)

Depictions of combat, literary, filmic, or otherwise, never had a sole monopoly on the impressions Americans and New Zealanders had of the Japanese enemy, or of their own situations and behaviours during the war years. Not long after the outbreak of hostilities, certain attendant experiences, at home and abroad, drew public attention, mainly centring upon the mass mobilizations, displacements, and captivities of people throughout the Pacific. In this chapter and the next, we shall selectively revisit two such focal points, observing how each continues to enlarge, complicate, and in some ways contest, the assumptions that remain axiomatic to the combat narrative. We begin with the ill-prepared, militarily defeated, invariably malnourished Far East Prisoners of War (hereafter “FEPOW’s”), holding off, for the moment, on the topic of the equally ill-prepared, legally crushed, but considerably better-fed Japanese/minority civilian internees, because the imprisoned servicemen garnered more public and media attention, a fact that ought to have granted them a comparatively greater presence in the cultural productions of the postwar years – and which, in fact, it did, though not always as they might have preferred.

Having endured their integration as slave labour in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, those FEPOW’s who lived to tell of it found that their experiences were, in turn, integrated

into the mass media and culture of the countries to which they returned.<sup>153</sup> In this respect, they were not singled out for special treatment. Within the media, the twinned narratives of valorisation (of self) and demonization (of Other), mutually interdependent, plumbed the limits of occupational and experiential material made available by returned servicemen, nor did the end of the war see the process drop-off. On the contrary, the narratives took on a retrospective aspect, but this did nothing to rethink or reframe the hero/villain dualism that had been in place since the war began. Demobilised returnees inhabited this media landscape on a day-to-day basis and were expected to get used to it, along with other peculiarities, such as ration cards, home cooked meals, and suburban planning. But unlike those servicemen who had never undergone capture by the Japanese, the FEPOW's found that, when their stories finally broke, the public knew comparatively little about their plight beforehand. That was hardly the fault of the average newsreader, for pervasive ignorance was the creation of allied censors and propagandists, who had feared that releasing information, which was in short supply anyhow, would undermine morale. A passing glance at the facets of the FEPOW experience had been enough to convince them as to its inappropriateness. Quite apart from the inhumane treatment of the prisoners, a bitterly frustrating story to which there were few practical solutions apart from ensuring the safe passage of Red Cross parcels, the mere fact of the FEPOW's themselves were reminders of ignominious defeat.

The best way to manage these disconcerting topics was to append them to a general sense of outrage that did not require – indeed, steered well clear of – referencing the particular conditions within prison camps, a tricky challenge that called for utmost care in the release of selected information. One noteworthy effort of 1942, an American poster, managed to strike the right balance. It featured an image of a captured United States Air Force serviceman being led to his execution, with a caption below that read: 'We'll make them pay if you keep up production.' Those

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153 The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a concept created by the Japanese government that sought to represent Japan, Manchukuo, China, and parts of Southeast Asia as integrated within a mutually reinforcing regional entity, divested of Western colonialism, and striving for the betterment of the respective populations.

who cared to peer closer would also have noticed that the unfortunate man was a member of the famous Doolittle Raid, the first to strike the Japanese home islands.<sup>154</sup> By means of these signs, the poster cushioned the atrocity between two ‘victories,’ one a military adventure, the other civilian labour. Two years later, another poster went a great deal further. Front and centre was an artist’s impression of a bedraggled American soldier, rice bowl in one hand, barbed wire in the other. The caption here reads: ‘The war’s not over ‘til our last man is free.’<sup>155</sup> This time there is no attempt to deflect attention elsewhere. The prisoner is the topic – an able-bodied, fully-clothed, if unshaven one – but by then civilians knew the end of the war was in sight, resulting in a relaxation of censorship rules and a more optimistic public outlook.

Materials like these illustrate how few essentials, and hardly any details, of the FEPOW experience had become public knowledge prior to repatriation. Though not a blank canvas, those friends and relatives of FEPOW’s resident within Britain, the Commonwealth, and the United States had received only a trickle of information and were as hungry for news as they were impatient to be reunited. Thus, when the first groups of liberated prisoners reached home, that which had been scarce was suddenly in oversupply and a swathe of dispatches, stories, and testimonials fell like a tidal wave on the Anglophone media. From jungle camps in Malaya, the Changi-Selarang complex in Singapore, Camp O'Donnell in the Philippines, to the dockyards, mines, and factories of mainland Japan, relief parties relayed reports, which found their way to war correspondents, who then took up the business of forging narratives. For a while these featured on the front page of every national newspaper, competing for space alongside an intimately related phenomenon: the newfangled bomb that, devastating in its own right, had apparently brought imprisonment to an end. So wide-ranging were the tales that one could have been forgiven for assuming that they constituted a complete picture, but of course this was far from the case. The FEPOW story did not emerge, nor

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154 Peter Darman, *Posters of World War II: Allied and Axis Propaganda 1939-1945* (New York: Metro Books, 2008), p. 187.

155 Peter Paret, Beth Irwin Lewis, and Paul Paret, *Persuasive Images: Posters of War and Revolution from the Hoover Institution Archives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 199.

was it ever taken 'as a whole.' Too many 'parts' (bodies, above all bodies, but also scribbled notations, and sundry miscellanea whose significance had been tremendous but which was now incommunicable) had been buried in the camps. Then too, not every story – more accurately, not every type of story – was given its dues. Editors and journalists could afford to be selective in what they wished to disclose, and were in fact spoiled for choice. Understandably, attention fell more on one's own nationals, partly answering local interest, but also taking advantage of those who were ready-at-hand for personal interviews. The story of a New Zealand airman who was forced to stand erect for five days and five nights received considerable attention in his country, for example.<sup>156</sup> But more 'general' experiences, such as starvation and beatings in captivity, or dehydration and fratricide aboard prison ships, made clear that isolated atrocities were nothing out of the ordinary.<sup>157</sup>

The process of sifting through this ugly morass led columnists toward the most brutal episodes of captivity, often alongside features disclosing the administration, communication, and transportation challenges necessary to take survivors back home. The latter aspects, clean, coordinated, and rational, served, textually speaking, to take some of the weight off the exhibition-like array of wrongdoings. They provided explicit reassurance that some sort of procedure was in place to manage the backflow of liberated personnel, and, more implicitly, a concomitant hope that 'routes' might exist to 'manage' the injuries that survivors carried within. Needless to say, in this latter respect they were wildly optimistic. Although survivor testimony circulated by dint of this logistical network, the road to recovery, if discovered, would last a good deal longer than the voyage home. But repatriation missions were only one topic to which statistics contributed. Raw numbers also proved helpful in summarising how many prisoners had surrendered and in which month; how long they had remained in specific places; how many men had lost their lives doing hard labour, and so on. Such matters were not supplemental to the qualitative domain, rather they contributed to an

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<sup>156</sup> "Brutal Treatment in Japanese Hands," *The Dominion Post*, 18 July 1945.

<sup>157</sup> "Prisoners of Japan," *The Press*, 3 September 1945; "Torment Aboard Prison Ships," *The Press*, 4 September 1945.

evolving matrix of meaning that took note of dates, nationalities, and prisoner numbers alongside experiences associated with particular regions. One might term this a 'cartography of captivity,' meaning that it had become possible, for the first time, to take the military defeats as a series of numerals – the loss of more than 50,000 British and Australian combatants in Singapore, for example, or of 25,000 Americans in the Philippines – *and* assign meaning to these figures in human terms. Hitherto, the numbers had existed as abstractions, mutely significant, and orbiting as a satellite around a larger object: the well-trodden battle and campaign narratives. Now they came into their own as signifiers of defining experiences, crucially elaborated through survivor testimonies, such as the building of the Burma-Siam 'death' railway, or the Bataan Death March. By drawing attention to these signature events, and the atrocities and brutality bound up in them, journalists forged the FEPOW narrative into a rhetorical tool that would reignite resentments against the Japanese throughout the subsequent decades. The acting assumption was that the Japanese government or the officers of the Imperial Japanese Army, probably both, had gone to deliberate lengths to encourage inhumane treatment of allied prisoners. One had only to mention 'Changi,' 'Bataan,' or 'the railway' and the appropriate images and scales sprang to mind.

In point of fact, and contrary to the simplified, preferred public opinions, Japanese atrocities and mistreatments had not been carried out as acts of national policy. Heeding the international condemnations that followed the Nanjing massacre of 1937, the Japanese government had taken steps to reign in the behaviour of its soldiers, and a new Field Service Code of 1941 made explicit reference to treating prisoners humanely, although it also stated that Japanese troops should not allow themselves to become prisoners. These two rules were not at cross purposes, and yet they carried a built-in tension that soldiers resolved by emphasising the no-surrender policy and forgetting the other directives.<sup>158</sup> In place of the latter, Japanese soldiers fell back on wartime ideologies in their dealings with prisoners, meaning, in essence, that their attitudes became

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158 Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), p. 208.

characterised by contemptuous actions and behaviours, the purpose of which was to denigrate and brutalise.<sup>159</sup> Unapparent both to the soldiers and their prisoners was the path that led to this point, and to the allied civilians who read summaries of the conflict the precise motives or negligence of the Japanese would not have occasioned much interest alongside the raw nature of the acts themselves.<sup>160</sup> Looking back on them, there was, in fact, no need to delve too deeply into motivations, since the reports of unrestrained, sadistic enemy actions fitted neatly into a pre-existent picture relayed through combat experiences and their cultural offshoots. Notwithstanding the media frenzy, therefore, the tales of atrocities committed against helpless prisoners did not function to disclose so much as corroborate a profile of the enemy that was already complete, in its stereotyped form. As we have seen in the examination of the sources in Chapter 1, combat novels would almost invariably represent Japanese soldiers as predisposed to excessive violence. But these works tended, on balance, to be more concerned with valorising allied servicemen than probing the mind of the enemy. Cultural productions devoted to the FEPOW experience, on the other hand, would present an ideal opportunity to correct the imbalance and give a salutary 'last word' on the nature of the enemy.

Heeding the opportunity, the majority of fictions relating to captivity under the Japanese reproduced the staple stereotypes without any trouble, casting their captors as childish, imitative, vindictive, and insectiform.<sup>161</sup> The recirculation of dialectical oppositions sought to close the book on the FEPOW experience, but these were old wares with a rich pedigree, and, while they may have

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159 S. P. MacKenzie, "The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II," *The Journal of Modern History* 66, no. 3 (1994): p. 519; James D. Morrow, "The Institutional Features of the Prisoners of War Treaties," *International Organization* 55, no. 4 (2001): p. 979.

160 Although I am more concerned with how 'explanations' were subordinated to, and absorbed within, prewar discourses of Othering, it is also possible that people shied from seeking or otherwise embracing 'explanations' because of what Claude Lanzmann has termed 'the obscenity of understanding' – that is, the sense of inadequacy that surrounds cause-and-effect explanations of atrocity. As Lanzmann puts it in respect to the Nazi Holocaust, "It is simply not possible to engender one out of the other. There is no solution of continuity between the two; there is rather a gap, an abyss, and this abyss will never be bridged." See Claude Lanzmann, "The Obscenity of Understanding: An Evening with Claude Lanzmann," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 206.

161 Louis Allen, "To Be a Prisoner," *Journal of European Studies* 16, no. [4] 64 (1986).



proved suitable for purposes of denigration, they could hardly claim to have been born of the FEPOW experience itself. Furthermore, close examination revealed that, far from facilitating historical accuracy and creative sensitivity, bedding down the FEPOW narrative in this manner tended to result in bland characterisation and sham, sentimental plotlines. Among the most influential productions, Pierre Boulle's, *The Bridge over the River Kwai* (1952) also stands as the most remiss in these respects. Typical of the novel's many preposterous scenarios is a moment in which the Japanese Commandant, Saito, and the English Colonel, Nicholson, hold a joint meeting to discuss construction of the bridge:

Saito did not understand what it was all about, but he had agreed to be present, not daring to ask for an explanation for fear of losing face by appearing ignorant of the customs of a civilisation which he hated but which impressed him in spite of himself.<sup>162</sup>

The role reversal implied in this moment overstates whatever advantage the British may have had in negotiating with their captors, but conceals this deception behind an upstaged Japanese character who, comically incompetent, takes the text almost to the point of burlesque.<sup>163</sup> To see Saito as the butt of colonial humour is accurate and sufficient as far as it goes, but the main significance of his character is, once again, that of the sacrificial subject: that is, a totemic offering or voodoo doll into which we, as readers, may stick the pins of moral anguish and historical injustice brought to us by events that ought-not-to-have-happened. Such a function is far from casual. It is redemptive, curative, and purifying all at the same time, and seeks above all to imagine the weakness of one's own society embodied in the form of an Other. By sacrificing this character, literally or stylistically,

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<sup>162</sup> Pierre Boulle, *The Bridge over the River Kwai*, trans. Xan Fielding (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1954), p. 76.

<sup>163</sup> Ian Watt, a literary scholar and former prisoner on the Burma-Siam railway, regarded this aspect as intentional in the novel, though he took a dimmer view of the film version and of the credence given to both versions by the general public. In a recollective piece, he writes that "The actual circumstances of our experience on the Kwai were not, of course, reflected in the novel or the movie; there is no reason why they should have been. But it is surely the deep blindness of our culture and media, both to the obdurate stubbornness of reality and to the stubborn continuities of history, which allowed the public to accept the plausibility of Nicholson's triumphs over his Japanese captors..." See Ian Watt, "The Humanities on the River Kwai," *Stanford Humanities Review* 8, no. 1 (2000): p. 31.

we divest ourselves of our own inferior qualities and reinvest in more preferential images of society. Three years later, David Lean's film adaptation of the novel accomplished much the same thing, though Sessue Hayakawa's Oscar-nominated performance as Saito was as much the product of trends in Hollywood casting as anything else.<sup>164</sup> In sum, whether as novel or film, the story says far less about conditions on the Burma-Siam railway than the need of mid-twentieth century ideologues to re-imagine the past after the fashion of old cultural essentialisms. Justly critical of this obscurantism is literary scholar Roger Bourke, who states that "There is a deep and sad historical irony here: that the best-known, most popular and notable account of the prisoner-of-war experience under the Japanese should happen to be the least authentic."<sup>165</sup>

If the most egregious faults of *The Bridge over the River Kwai* were the ways in which it understated material hardships and overstated British authority, it also fell short of the mark by refusing to recognise the complexity of allied-Japanese social relationships in captivity, as well as the decidedly fragmented politicisation of the allied prisoners. The way in which the British come across is, by and large, socially unified and resistant – combative, even, in making their points.<sup>166</sup> Where large groups of captives were concerned, there was a measure of truth to the scenario, heavily weighted in favour of Japanese prerogatives. But as a group survival strategy, it was foolhardy, seldom successful, and seemed to involve sticking your neck out further than wisdom allowed. Far

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164 The refined sophistication, tinged with sadism, which Hayakawa brought to the screen had already been polished some forty years earlier in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915), and thus presented few novelties for actor or audience. See Daisuke Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 276.

165 Roger Bourke, *Prisoners of the Japanese: Literary Imagination and the Prisoner-of-war Experience* (Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2006), p. 88.

166 Facing off, captive and captor compete in defining a shared situation, often negotiated around niceties of behaviour minor in themselves but representative of a larger issue at stake: the struggle over who will determine the protocol of intergroup communication. This struggle is not over which group will command the other, for that matter has been determined by the outcome of the military campaign preceding the narrative. By right of victory, the Japanese always dominate, and neither group ever contests the point. What is at stake is the manner in which the two groups are to proceed in their relationship – that is, which group will first concede the other's communicative norms as the precedent for future interaction. This 'communication gap' becomes the new battlefield over which the two sides strive for ownership. Both groups are aware of the perils and hardships associated with the gap and both seek to close it by deploying their own communicative norms as universals. As the struggle over intergroup conduct proceeds, frequently the issues become saturated with the cultural values informing their respective systems. Thus the 'battle' is never solely one of competing willpower – it also reflects the need to maintain the integrity and subjective importance of one's own national-cultural background, invariably categorised as 'civilisation.'

better to do as you were told and confine resistance to sabotage or dragging your heels on the daily grind. As a narrative structure, on the other hand, its symmetrical neatness promised umpteen possibilities for vainglorious posturing and setpieces – all of which are delivered in David Lean’s film, where they appear entirely natural.

Subsequent works would seek to complicate this picture, backing away from the captor-captive ‘superstructure’ binary to explore the multiple oppositions within groups, as well as between them. Nor was there any shortage of case studies on which to build. Memoirs remind us of well-known instances in which prisoner conduct left much to be desired, although the accounts do not always agree on the particulars. Among the most intriguing debacles was that which took place in Fukuoka Camp #17, where the black market, a mainstay of almost every camp and a crucial way in which to supplement one’s meagre rations, slipped into outright racketeering. Here is how one survivor described a dispute:

It was noon when I started to enter the doorway of the galley and had to excuse myself because it was blocked by Commander Little and Corporal Pav. Entering the galley I overheard Corp. Pav talking in a tone that I have never heard any enlisted man talk to an officer before. “If I don’t get you, there will be someone who will,” he said.<sup>167</sup>

Another account of life in the same camp, alludes to similar incidents, but repaints Commander Little as considerably more menacing:

It didn’t take us long to verify that the American officer in charge of the mess hall was worse than any of the Japanese. He was a despot of the worst kind, and at the slightest provocation he would deprive a man of his food. I saw men severely punished by him for entering the mess hall with their caps on. Worse than that, he would turn men over to the Japanese guards to be punished. He was a bad one, and we prayed that he would be dealt with before

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<sup>167</sup> Charles Balaza, *Life as an American Prisoner of War of the Japanese* (Fairfield, CA: 1st Books, 2002), p. 169-70.

the thing was over. Even the Japanese were wary of him. They called him 'skoshi dono' (little god).<sup>168</sup>

The situation in Camp #17, variously reported, became notorious even when set alongside other camps on mainland Japan, though it was distinct only in degree, never in kind. Those who observed such heinous factionalism would try, through memoir writing, to set the record straight, but creative writers knew that the 'who did what' details were murky and, in any case, far less interesting than the drama of a camp population policing, purging and exploiting itself. Diving headfirst into the maelstrom was British expatriate author James Clavell, who used the clash of wills to structure *King Rat* (1962), a novel in which the Japanese barely figure at all, except to check for radios and announce the end of the war. Their stick-figure woodenness is distinct from that of Boulle's, in that these are background entities at the margins of the text, leaving the central conflict to the prisoners' own devising. Indeed, the hatred that Lieutenant Grey nurtures for Corporal King is made all the more shocking, perhaps, by the sheer irrelevance of the guards.<sup>169</sup>

If the figure of the 'bad' prisoner, or at least a morally ambiguous one, was a necessary step toward dethroning the clear-cut punctiliousness of Pierre Boulle's narrative, so too was the possibility of a 'good' Japanese captor, one who either showed compassion toward the prisoners or provided a convincing justification as to his actions.<sup>170</sup> However, the choice between depictions of

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168 Gene S. Jacobsen, *We Refused to Die: My Time as a Prisoner of War in Bataan and Japan, 1942-1945* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2004), p. 189.

169 Clavell knew how to stoke old rivalries as well, deliberately suggesting that, under conditions of captivity, nationalities would always revert to their base components: pedantic classism where the British were concerned; thievery in the case of the Australians; and gangsterism for the money-grubbing Americans. Whether we find these reductions provocative or amusing, the novel invites us to invest in the divisions and thereby delivers a knockout punch to the notion of prisoners as socially intact, politically homogeneous, and united behind their 'civilised' values.

170 In the immediate postwar years, the figure of a compassionate Japanese guard is hard to come by in literature. One thinks of the longsuffering Japanese sergeant who escorts European women and children around Malaya in Nevil Shute's novel, *A Town Like Alice* (1950), but he is never fully characterised. Memoirs offer more interesting figures, though many texts were published only at the turn of the twentieth-century, long after public perceptions of the FEPOW experience had been forged by more 'popular' productions. The former Olympian Louis Zamperini, for example, made a point of remembering how a Christian guard saved his life on Kwajalein Atoll, an incident that later proved helpful to him as a point of reference to diffuse anti-Japanese sentiments among American Occupation personnel. But Zamperini's success in this regard was partly due to the respect he commanded as an American athlete. Those who were not celebrities had more difficulty, as Langdon Gilkey makes clear when he recalls attitudes among American servicemen following his release:

kindly Japanese guards, on the one hand, or bestial tormentors, on the other, was not one to which fiction writers usually gave much attention. In their worlds, there was always room for the occasional 'goodie,' but public preference and historical record were united in according more attention to atrocity over charity. Toeing the line in this fashion, most novels have tended to dwell upon brutal moments: thus Colonel Nicholson endures solitary confinement under the heat of the tropical sun; Joe Harman undergoes crucifixion in *A Town Like Alice*; Jack Celliers is buried alive in Laurens van der Post's *The Seed and the Sower* (1963); civilian prisoners starve to death in J. G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* (1984); and Digger Keen's friend is killed right before his eyes in David Malouf's *The Great World* (1990). Of these, van der Post's novel is especially noteworthy, in that he proved that one did not have to fall back on – or at any rate rely on – a legacy of stereotypes, as Pierre Boulle had done, in order to illustrate Japanese behaviour at its cruellest. His opinion of Hara, partly revealed in the epigraph to this chapter, denies us the satisfaction of sacrificing him in the manner of Saito, forcing us instead to approach cultural values relatively. As a rare, and decidedly controversial, position in a literary history that has tended, by and large, to avoid probing Japanese intentions and mentalities, van der Post's novel signals the potential built into the FEPOW experience to act as a corrective to the simplistic binary of combat narratives. Accordingly, we shall

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Having been completely closeted from the action of the war, our communication with the soldiers fresh from combat was minimal. They seemed surprised and a little resentful when we prisoners admitted that we had not been badly mistreated – as if a person were a bit of a phony if he hadn't suffered in a camp.

The surliness of Gilkey's compatriots is understandable, partly because he has refused to deliver the expected response, more so still because information of his sort betokens an outlook at variance with the paradigms set forth in combat narratives, and thereby threatens their primacy. Still, as these veterans knew already, denying FEPOW's their right to an opinion was out of the question. After all, if prisoners could seldom lay claim to lengthy World War II combat careers, they had come face-to-face with the enemy and lived under him in a way that free combatants hardly ever did, at least after Guadalcanal. People like Gilkey were entitled to have their say, because they had inhabited an experiential frontier alien to those who had not been FEPOW's. That they were not always 'compliant' testifiers was awkward, but did nothing to disturb the vision of the hardhearted, hard-hitting Japanese captor. Dissenting testimonies were simply the exceptions that proved the rule and, indeed, by Gilkey's own admission, his experience had been atypical in comparison to what prisoners endured elsewhere. In Zamperini's case too, his account of the Christian guard appears outstanding when set alongside the mistreatment he underwent on all other occasions, particularly at the hands of a past master of torture known as 'the Bird,' whom Zamperini describes thus:

Deranged, brutal beyond belief, vicious like someone who tortured animals as a child before turning his evil talents on people, the Bird by his mere existence allowed me to focus all the hatred I'd accumulated and let fester since my capture.

See Langdon Gilkey, *Shangtung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1966), p. 225.; Louis Zamperini and David Rensin, *Devil at my Heels: A WWII Hero's Epic Saga of Torment, Survival, and Forgiveness* (New York: Perennial, 2003), p. 152.

shortly examine two recent novels to see how, or whether at all, today's writers have diverged from the productions of the last half century. But first, a confessional word on the politics this necessarily dreggs up. Literary history provides us a yardstick to determine whether a form or genre may be pronounced 'living' – judged by 'growth,' 'significant development,' and the like. (If necessary, the yardstick may act as a cane in order to chastise authors for their want of creative adventurism). Having drawn attention to the literary history of the FEPOW novel, I have already set this process of judgements in motion, and it now behoves me to state how far we ought to let them proceed. It should be clear that sympathetic renditions of Japanese soldiers, guards, and interrogators still represent a new frontier in FEPOW narratives, and that this may offer a worthwhile avenue for creative writing – but not just for its own sake, or, to put it another way, not to satisfy the 'directives' of literary 'development.' Fiction writers may yet take this route, but, as informed readers, we must not insist on it, nor should we position 'liberal' works like van der Post's as a telos. To do so risks investing 'legitimacy' in literary trends, buoyed by multicultural curricula, that critique or undo the cultural misrepresentations of colonised, conquered, or disenfranchised subjects. In the case of Anglophone writings on Japanese nationals or ethnic minorities, there can be no doubt as to the argument for such a critique – and of FEPOW literature as constituting a hoard of tropes suited to the purpose. But one should hardly like to 'undo' the imperative to disclose Japanese wartime behaviours and actions that, coincidentally or 'otherwise,' bear some resemblance to stereotypes. I therefore suggest retaining the observations of literary history while avoiding their dictates.

This is an admittedly unsatisfying approach with several drawbacks. For a start, it appears to leave us hamstrung from making any concrete judgements. More seriously still, it invests a good deal of primacy in the historical over and above the creative writer's right to artistic privilege. Ironically, this second issue may actually describe the dilemma facing those creative writers of today who take up the challenge of writing the FEPOW novel into the twenty-first century. They too, that is, feel hemmed in by the 'rawness' of the FEPOW experiences documented by historians. In what follows, therefore, I shall be at least partly concerned with taking the pulse of contemporary FEPOW

writings to see whether the literature may be in danger of decline, or even gradual extinction. Measured by its neglect in scholarly circles, the literature is already ghettoised. The rampant xenophobia contained in many FEPOW novels leaves literary scholars turning up their noses in disgust, though they generally stop short of criticism. For their part, creative writers are probably not immediately aware of this state of affairs, but as the current generation of writers – significantly, those who never experienced captivity themselves – seek out new pathways, or return to old ones, they take on the burden of response. Jim Lehrer's *The Special Prisoner* (2000) and Peter Wells' *Lucky Bastard* (2007) provide ready case studies here, for each novel detours around the captivity narrative even while making imprisonment the topic. In Lehrer's case, the ways in which the FEPOW experience intersects with ongoing polemics that surround the 'politics of apology' concern him most.<sup>171</sup> As for Wells, captivity is a phantasm that we see only through the eyes of two adults who struggle to recall the ways in which their father's role in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal impacted upon their childhood. In other words, these writers do not resolve the issue of how to portray Japanese captors for a contemporary readership, preferring instead to reframe captivity as an abstract topic under discussion rather than a story ready at hand.

### ***Penned Up Enemies***

If fiction writers feel prepared or compelled to step back from a captivity narrative as the mainstay of the FEPOW novel, we must take care not to assume that their intention is to open up discursive pathways that advance reconciliation with the Japanese. By no stretch of the imagination could one term *The Special Prisoner* conciliatory. But neither is it purely concerned with the old images of cruel Japanese guards. Atrocities matter enormously, to be sure, but more pressing still is to convey

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<sup>171</sup> It is worth noting that, as former prisoners become fewer in number, so the intensity of their demands for official apology becomes more intense. One might frame Lehrer's novel as reflecting the urgency of this polemic, among others. See Michael Cunningham, "Prisoners of the Japanese and the Politics of Apology: A Battle over History and Memory," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 4 (2004): p. 567-8.

a sense, and ascribe reasons to, the obduracy of those contemporary Japanese who turn a blind eye to war crimes, even when (or perhaps because) the events in question took place over half a century ago. Within this polemic, the captivity narrative becomes a backdrop, useful, up to a point, as a way of reminding us that ‘this stuff matters,’ but no longer an end in itself. Gone are the well-worn, comforting images of genteel career officers, colonel bogey marches, and masterful ‘bridge-building’; our task as readers is to put rose-tinted remembrances aside for a moment and instead ask why Japanese people tend not to remember at all (translation: not in the ‘approved’ fashions). Politics is the order of the day, and individual memory is the terrain on which conflicts are staged. Indeed, agitation to establish the ‘facts’ – that is, what happened to whom, at whose hand, under what conditions, and with what justification – matters a great deal more than nuanced, tentative meditations on the nature of atrocity and the trauma to which it gives rise. None of this is surprising when we recall that Americans are chiefly acquainted with Lehrer through his role as a news presenter with The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Concision, elucidation, simplification, and abbreviation are good ways of keeping viewers tuned in (electronically if not intellectually) and Lehrer follows suit in his writing, meaning that we cannot expect a convincing portrayal of the traumatised mind but must instead take the condition for granted.<sup>172</sup> What we can expect, instead, is a novel that both taps and feeds into ongoing issues of public debate, specifically those that concern official and individual apologies – a recurrent political and media topic in the preceding decade. In 1993, for example, President Clinton had apologised to Native Hawaiians for actions that brought about the overthrow of the Kingdom in 1893, and in 1995, Queen Elizabeth II apologised to a Māori tribe for land confiscations that took place under colonial rule. Lehrer did not have these specific instances in mind when he wrote *The Special Prisoner*, but his novel is certainly oriented toward the mid-1990’s as a time in which anniversary commemorations featured frequently in the

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172 Lehrer could touch upon trauma as a theme without delving into its meaning partly because, at the time of publication, American readers were already used to trauma as a topic or trope within cultural productions and news features. See Kirby Farrell, *Post-traumatic culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineties* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 2.



media. Timeliness had been a factor in prompting the President to issue his apology, and expectations ran high that the fiftieth-anniversary of the end of World War II would allow – no, better than that, *prompt* – states and individuals to ‘redress’ past grievances in like fashion. The stars were in alignment in other respects as well. In 1989, one of the most potent symbols of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall, had been hammered, chipped, and bulldozed away, signifying as nothing else could that the seeming-permanence of past divisions could crumble in a matter of days and that, no matter what lay ahead in the long-term, an opportune moment of soul-searching was there for anyone who could rise to the occasion.<sup>173</sup>

As a guiding principle of diplomacy and international relations, nobody could find fault with this ideal. It was sensible, humane, and universal, and also caught sight of another rejuvenating sparkle just coming into view on the horizon: the new millennium. But as a practice, few could live up to it and in such cases as these, which were the majority anyhow, soul-searching’s ugly twin, finger-pointing, offered a time-honoured alternative approach: ‘I shall ponder my own culpability in due course but first you must state yours, for the record.’ Dignified to the point of strangulation, the sole benefit of redrawing battle lines in this fashion was that one was guaranteed to receive a prompt response. In terms of mood, discourse, and narrative, Lehrer’s novel emerges from, and is partly structured around, the wreckage of political arguments that was churned up by this shattered (and shattering) nonstarter. Needless to say, in his story, and in the news that informs it, the issues in question run the gamut, but tend to include the attack on Pearl Harbor, the treatment of allied FEPOW’s, and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as staples. If we take a quick, news-presenter’s run-through of the flashpoints that aggravated and got tangled up in these issues,

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173 Sebastian Conrad has suggested that the end of the Cold War refocused Japanese attention onto the memories of its imperial adventures, particularly in respect to the lasting grievances of Chinese and Koreans. See Sebastian Conrad, "Remembering Asia: History and Memory in Post-Cold War Japan," in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

observing the anniversary of the war's end as a route to reconciliation starts to appear politically premature, even naïve.

In Japan, the decade was ushered-in by the Emperor's death in 1989, possibly a good time to reopen historical questions but, then again, possibly not. Nagasaki Mayor Hitoshi Motoshima seemed to think so, and when he raised questions as to the Emperor's war guilt, a right-wing extremist shot him in the back.<sup>174</sup> A year later, the anniversary of Pearl Harbor gave the Mayor of Honolulu a chance to weigh into the historical controversies by insisting that the Japanese apologise for starting the war. But when President Bush, Sr. tendered the request the Japanese turned it down.<sup>175</sup> War memorial services in 1993 provided a fine opportunity for Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa to refer to Japan's wartime actions in terms of 'aggression,' but fellow Liberal Democrats and members of the Japan Bereaved Families Association (Nihon Izokukai), an association with conservative politics, forced him to scale back his vocabulary.<sup>176</sup> This set the trend for the fiftieth anniversary as well, and by then hitherto marginal stories relating to Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, history textbook content, and official visits to Yasukuni Shrine were appearing in Western media relatively frequently. But 1995 was embarrassing for the United States as well. Curators at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum had planned an exhibition commemorating the end of the Pacific War (and the start of the Cold War) by featuring the *Enola Gay* as an exhibit. They had to think again. Representatives of the American Legion and the Air Force Association successfully lobbied to have the exhibition reconceptualised, more specifically by de-emphasising the suffering wrought on Japanese civilians by the dropping of 'Little Boy' and 'Fat Man.' Then there was the incident, that same year, of the twelve-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl who was gang raped by three United States Marines. Outraged protests in Japan made clear that the

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174 For an account of what prompted mayor Motoshima to speak out on the matter of the Emperor's guilt, see Erna Paris, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p. 149-52.

175 Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994), p. 294.

176 Norma Field, "War and Apology: Japan, Asia, the Fiftieth, and After," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 5, no. 1 (1997): p. 3-5.

presence of United States military bases was no longer unquestionably accepted, or welcomed, by the Japanese public.

These flare-ups reveal that political watchdogs (and hitmen) on either side of the Pacific were at least as aggressive toward attempts at historical revisionism within their own countries as they were hostile to antithetical positions abroad. Ceremonies, exhibits, and human bodies became the rallying cries and battlefields over which issues of guilt, apology, and victimhood were fought. The cartoonish metaphor of two antagonists, Japan and the United States, engaging in a transpacific sparring contest is therefore inappropriate, or at any rate reductive, given that rivalry between institutions, lobbyists, and private individuals meant that neither nation was in any sense unified.<sup>177</sup> However, if a given issue evinced the fragmentation of opinions and policies within a particular national population, its resolution (invariably conservative) could evoke more consistent feelings of righteousness and outrage within the international community. A number of literary publications, covering fiction, memoir, and journalism, reflected this trend and also illustrate how one's knowledge of the Pacific War was increasingly a resource as well as an endowment – its value, that is, had become at least partly extrinsic, something to compare and contrast with other people's knowledge in order to take the measure of their politics. The first noteworthy publication, Ian Buruma's *The Wages of Guilt* (1994), placed public opinion in Japan and Germany side-by-side in just this fashion, and ends up upbraiding the Japanese for their recalcitrance:

What I heard and read was surprising to a European: the treatment of Western POWs was hardly remembered at all, even though *The Bridge on the River Kwai* had been a popular success in Japan. (I often wondered who the Japanese identified with, the Japanese commandant or Alec Guinness. Neither, said a Japanese friend: "We liked the American hero,

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177 In his interviews with individual Japanese, oral historian Philip Seaton reaches this conclusion, stating that "The Japanese are frequently accused of 'failing to address the past' or of 'denial', 'ignorance' and 'amnesia' concerning the war. [...] The reality, however, is that debate over how to address war responsibility issues has ensured that war history remains highly contested in Japan and Japanese people have been unable to settle on a dominant narrative of the conflict." See Philip Seaton, "'Do You Really Want to Know What Your Uncle Did?' Coming to Terms with Relatives' War Actions in Japan," *Oral History* 34, no. 1 (2006): p. 59.

William Holden.”) Bataan, the sacking of Manila, the massacres in Singapore, these were barely mentioned. But the suffering of the Japanese, in China, Manchuria, the Philippines, and especially in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was remembered vividly, as was the captivity of Japanese soldiers in Siberia after the war.<sup>178</sup>

Once again and on cue, the *River Kwai* film turns up like a bad penny. Here though, Buruma uses it not so much as a final word on history or remembrance but as a stimulus to provoke opinion.<sup>179</sup> He has no investment in whether David Lean did justice to the FEPOW narrative, instead preferring to see how the Japanese react to the film before administering a healthy rap on the knuckles for their impudence. Two years later, Eric Lomax published *The Railway Man* (1996), a memoir remarkable in many respects, not the least of which is the account of a repentant former interrogator and a forgiving ex-prisoner coming together in old age.<sup>180</sup> Perhaps these two publications, British rather than American, were able to approach historical controversies more nimbly than American authors, though the circumstances of both writers resist generalisations. What we may say with more certainty is that, by the end of the decade, Americans were observing Japan's unwillingness to tender apology, both to them and to Japan's neighbours, with increased attention.<sup>181</sup> Reactions were various. Scholars impassively noted that the missed opportunities and apparent insincerity with which apologies took place was not a uniquely Japanese phenomenon, and that a 'how-to' guide to issuing a 'successful' apology might prove helpful to future efforts.<sup>182</sup>

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178 Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, p. 7.

179 Ian Buruma is hardly alone in using the film as a kind of acid test (perhaps a stick as well) to sound out Japanese opinions on FEPOW history, politics, and cultural representation. For passing thoughts on the film's value as a teacher's resource in Japanese university courses, see David Boggett, "Note on the Thai Burma Railway Part I: 'The Bridge on the River Kwai' - The Movie," *Journal of Kyoto Seika University* 19(2000).

180 Eric Lomax, *The Railway Man* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 262-76.

181 In December 1999, the 'International Citizen's Forum on Japanese War Atrocities and Redress' was held in Tokyo. At this time, the question was repeatedly raised as to why the Japanese government could not apologise in the way that Germany's had. See Paul Gordon Schalow, "Japan's War Responsibility and the Pan-Asian Movement for Redress and Compensation: An Overview," *East Asia: An International Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (2000).

182 Mark Gibney and Erik Roxstrom, "The Status of State Apologies," *Human Rights Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2001): p. 926-37.

Less constructive but no less derivative is *The Special Prisoner*, which reflected the pent-up hostilities of an American public grown weary with a Japan that was saying no.<sup>183</sup> Unlike writers such as James Clavell and J. G. Ballard, who were themselves former prisoners and who were content enough to set their stories in wartime, Lehrer comes to his topic with the realisation that, were captivity narratives sufficient in themselves to evoke remorse from the Japanese, they would already have done so. This is not to say that the first captivity narratives were motivated in this way, but rather that turn-of-the-twentieth century authors showed willingness to strike political poses that took account of history writing, current affairs, and preceding cultural productions.<sup>184</sup> In Lehrer's novel, the acting assumption is that the Japanese have a tin ear for contrition and that there should be a proper accounting, if necessary at the hand of a strong-willed 'accountant.' This mandate services us with one meaning of the novel's title, which becomes evident when the main character, John Watson, traps a Japanese man in a hotel room and subjects him to initially gentle, then rigorous, and ultimately fatal questioning as to his military background. Watson suspects Tashimoto, his victim, of being 'the Hyena,' a sadistic interrogator at Camp Sengei 4 in Japan, to which Watson was taken as a young U.S. Army pilot after parachuting from his stricken B-29. That suffices as a motive for Watson's actions, and Lehrer devotes the first half of the novel to the role-reversal that finds Watson the master of his former tormentor, while the second leads up to Watson's murder trial. It is the first that deserves attention, for here Lehrer forges a path across the uneven landscape of American and Japanese war memories, while interspersing sections that recall Watson's time as a 'special prisoner' in Japan.

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183 Here I paraphrase the title of a well-known and controversial nonfiction publication by Shintaro Ishihara, who was elected Governor of Tokyo in 1999. Ishihara thought Japanese people overly subservient in their dealings with the United States, and pointed out that the American military was reliant on Japanese semiconductor technology. He also believed the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan demonstrated a racism that had continued to exert influence in trade relations. See Shintaro Ishihara, *The Japan that can say no*, trans. Frank Baldwin (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 28.

184 On several occasions, Lehrer has John Watson refer to recent English-language history publications, such as Gavan Daws' *Prisoners of the Japanese* (1994) and Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking* (1997). Chang went on to write a favourable review of Lehrer's novel and may also have partly inspired British author Mo Hayder's *Tokyo* (2004), a novel that bears no small similarity to Lehrer's in its depictions of unrepentant Japanese war criminals living carefree, well-to-do lives.

As a literary scenario, the chance encounter between unreconciled enemies, surely a common fantasy (fearful or wistful) of those who have endured atrocity, offers immediate advantages to the author. Most obviously, it provides a ready structure for reflecting on the past using two interlocutors, whose dialogue may be Socratic (truth-seeking, in an abstract sense), eristic (persistently and aggressively polarised), or pacifistic (reaching for agreement, even in the face of disagreement). In all probability, the discussions will transition between different modes at different times, with correspondingly different investments in mood, affect, and socio-political agenda-setting. Consistent to every stage, however, is a juridical motif that, whether fully confronted or entirely dormant, hangs over the conversation like the sword of Damocles, offering the swift justice of the executioner instead of the solicitor's tiresome (possibly redundant) rhetorical posturing. That explains the scenario's dramatic appeal. Part and parcel with this approach, engendering it, in fact, is the necessity to break down and detail the time between the original events in question and the present day. That yawning gulf of intervening years is what Watson attempts to bridge, even as Tashimoto virulently denies having committed any war crime.

During their opening converse, we notice, most obviously, that neither Watson nor Tashimoto have remained in the armed services. Both have moved on to other things, Watson to the ministry and Tashimoto to a lucrative banking career. In the latter's case, this might suggest several things to us: an aptitude for risk management, calculated investments, and fear of bankruptcy, to name several possibilities; or perhaps someone who, to give them their dues, knows how to 'balance the books' or, alternatively and less charitably, someone who can always find a 'let-out clause' when they need it. But it is more likely that Lehrer associates him with a well heeled profession as a way to remind readers of the levels of prosperity Japanese corporations achieved in the 1980's – itself enough to elicit sporadic commentaries of a pugnacious sort, as we have already seen in the last chapter. Tashimoto's luxurious San Diego hotel room is not only more than he deserves, if we go

down this route, it is positively outrageous.<sup>185</sup> As Watson barges inside seeking ‘payback,’ therefore, he enters a playing field that is discursively weighted in his favour, as far as we are concerned, though ostensibly his motivations are of a private nature. Once inside, he takes on the role of a moral ‘accountant’ who attempts to ‘tally’ the injuries and injustices inflicted on FEPOW’s by the Japanese in a way that will hit home with Tashimoto. But Watson’s postwar profession as a Methodist minister and bishop complicates rather than aids this process, mainly by introducing the possibility (and service) of moral absolution for Tashimoto even as the latter insists on his innocence. The result is a stilted, telegraphed series of statements:

“I forgave you long ago,” said Watson.

“I have never done anything to you.” The Japanese man remained standing rigidly, defiantly.

“You were a terrible man, possibly one of the worst God ever put on the face of this earth.”

“I am a wonderful man.”<sup>186</sup>

And so on. What saves this from the pitfall of didacticism is the collapsing of difference between the two positions, at least to some extent. Tashimoto’s unyielding repudiation sends Watson into a pique of fury and violence, which is not the antithesis of this type of confrontation so much as its logical termination, as I have already noted. Acting thus reveals to Watson the possibility of his own equivalent guilt, in historical terms, and we must ask the same question that Watson later asks of himself: what could drive him, a bishop and a forgiving man, to kill a fellow human being? Two possibilities beckon, both of which call to mind Watson’s struggle to forgive the Japanese in the postwar years. As we later learn, this process was gruelling indeed, and led eventually toward a career in the clergy – to the profession of forgiveness, one might say.<sup>187</sup> Of course, the murder of

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<sup>185</sup> Jim Lehrer, *The Special Prisoner* (New York: Random House, 2000), p. 21.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111-16.

Tashimoto renders this forgiveness of questionable value and authenticity, unless we grant that forgiveness may be undone by a referent's incapacity or unwillingness to pursue a course of self-examination. Such a qualification may be termed 'contingent forgiveness,' and requires mutual engagement by both parties for its sustenance. Had Tashimoto cooperated and admitted his guilt, Watson's forgiveness would have been full and unreserved, if we pursue this neat, clear-cut division of responsibility. Less preferential, on the other hand, is the hypothesis that Watson never truly forgave the Japanese to begin with, largely because doing so would presuppose a feeling of guiltlessness on one's own part, and Watson, as a pilot, was not guiltless. He had, in fact, been troubled by the dropping of incendiary bombs on Japanese civilians and turned to a career in the church partly as a way to bury his guilt.

As it happens, both are true. Watson admits, in a sermon, to having carried vestigial hatreds within him, and certainly Tashimoto is resistant on every count, owning up to nothing.<sup>188</sup> But the possibility of moral equivalence between these two men remains more speculative than a fully-realised thesis. We are to remember, Lehrer would have us know, that forgiveness is every bit as challenging as apology, though it is seldom perceived as such and is usually taken for granted as a matter of course.<sup>189</sup> Granting that this challenge makes Watson's position morally ambiguous, this ought not to distract from the obduracy of the Japanese, which is the *real* bone of contention. Tashimoto's language is worth appraising:

I am a Japanese man named Tashimoto but not the one you had your unfortunate encounter with in World War II. But let me speak for him, if I must. Let me speak for him and all of us who survived that terrible experience. Let me say that I regret any harm and suffering that was inflicted on you unnecessarily by anyone connected with the Imperial Army of Japan. But

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 158-59.

<sup>189</sup> Aaron Lazare makes this same point in his study of apologies in society and culture. See Aaron Lazare, *On Apology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 228-29.



I do not offer you an apology. I served in that army, and I make no apologies to you or to anyone else for that service.<sup>190</sup>

While it is not modelled on any one speech, Tashimoto's diction conforms to perceived precedents in Japanese official statements of the late twentieth-century, meaning that he stops short of apology while alluding to wrongdoing in the same breath. Rhetorical horse-trading of this sort may make his speech seem like a casual, throwaway affair, but it also strikes an excruciating balance between remorse and historical relativism in a way that might answer the needs of the aggrieved party and preserve Tashimoto's dignity. Referring to the 'terrible experience' of the war is a deliberately vague yet crucial means of sustaining the arrangement, for it implies a shared suffering not wholly of Japan's making. We do not need to be told what he means. The atomic bombings, and the firebombing missions that preceded them, have at various times taken on the discursive function of 'shielding' Japanese officials from unwelcome historical revisionism, or otherwise provoked arguments that one scholar has aptly termed 'duelling victimhoods.'<sup>191</sup> The image does as well for understanding what takes place between Tashimoto and Watson, each of whom remains intensely aware of their own particular grievance and disdainful of the other's.<sup>192</sup> Shades of the difficulties that beset Prime Minister Hosokawa and the curators of the Smithsonian Museum come through here, and when we note that the novel's chronology locates the events in 1995 (five years prior to the time of publication), the characters' representative, almost allegorical quality shines through.<sup>193</sup>

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190 Lehrer, *The Special Prisoner*, p. 88.

191 Elizabeth S. Dahl, "Is Japan Facing Its Past? The Case of Japan and Its Neighbors," in *The Age of Apology: Facing Up to the Past*, ed. Mark Gibney, et al., *Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 250.

192 The attitudes Lehrer portrays are extremes, but echoes of the same polarity is in evidence at war memorials and museums, where visitors may find it in themselves to question their prior notions of victim/aggressor, but may also prefer to invoke a 'balancing' exemplar from their own national histories that serves to qualify the messages they are receiving. In his study of Japanese visitors to the Arizona Memorial, Yujin Yaguchi has noted that a certain segment of the visitors, while appreciating the educative value of the memorial, state the need for Americans to learn more about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. See Yujin Yaguchi, "War Memories across the Pacific: Japanese Visitors at the Arizona Memorial," in *The Unpredictability of the Past: Memories of the Asia-Pacific War in U.S.-East Asian Relations*, ed. Marc Gallicchion, *American Encounters/Global Interactions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 241-42.

193 Lehrer, *The Special Prisoner*, p. 19.

Naturally, Tashimoto's murder proves the limits of this arrangement and Lehrer devotes the second half of the novel to picking over the details of the historical arguments, with the added imperative of redefining Watson's subjectivity once it becomes clear that he did, in fact, mistake Tashimoto for his former captor. Getting the wrong man does not invalidate Watson's grievances, which have a life of their own in the world of politics and international relations, but it does suggest an obtuse, unreasoning confusion, to say the least. Effectively, this puts him on the defensive for the rest of the novel, and, more to the point, allows us to approach Japanese interpretations of history through a less partisan narrative lens. Although Tashimoto's murder is a tabloid-style crime of passion, therefore, it serves another purpose by arresting the sense of righteousness associated with Watson's position. Lehrer avoids this high toned posturing for the rest of the novel, in favour of a humbled, consolidated Watson who, having been the de facto champion of FEPOW grievances, now refuses to defend himself. What we expect, therefore, in the closing sequences, is an antinationalist novel that looks severely on historical pedantry. Indeed, it could almost be thus, were it not for a final twist that sees Watson, serving out a jail term, receive a letter from Singapore informing him that the Tashimoto he killed had been every bit as brutal there as his counterpart in Japan.<sup>194</sup> The letter has a redemptive quality, and could turn everything around one last time. But instead Watson discards it, giving no reasons, and then quietly passes away in his sleep. We may take what we like from his decision: a resignation to the unrecoverability of the past; the martyrdom of the unjustly vanquished; or perhaps a rewriting of the 'lest we forget' phrase into 'lest we forget *to remind*.' Ultimately, there is no single meaning to which Lehrer shepherds us, and that in itself may be symptomatic of – or a good epitaph to – the state of the FEPOW novel as a literary form. Prior to this, every twentieth-century FEPOW novel had delivered an unequivocal impression of Japanese brutality, even if tempered by a degree of sympathy, as in van der Post's case, but what Lehrer gives us is an impression of an American society that has become a good deal less attentive to the perspectives of surviving prisoners. The knowledge landscape that Lehrer has Watson inhabit is

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 220-21.

not a wholly sympathetic one, and in this respect his writing dovetails with similar depictions in Peter Wells' novel.

### ***Strolling Down Memory Pain***

Speaking in the Christchurch Town Hall during the garden city's annual writers' festival in 2006, Senior Oral Historian Alison Parr exposed potential linkages between her work at the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and those creative writers who shared the stage.<sup>195</sup> The affiliation was not especially challenging to uphold. An ongoing commitment to interviewing New Zealand's veterans of the Second World War had long since alerted her to the likelihood of oral testimonies ending up on the desk of fiction writers, where they would no doubt become 'fodder' to better convey the nitty-gritty particularities of war. As with people, so with their memories, apparently. But what to make of it? Acting the role of gatekeeper to the doors of private knowledge would never do, no matter how tempting it may have been to adopt a protective stance on behalf of her interviewees (and the badge of trust they imagined pinned to her lapel). Neither she nor they could claim invulnerability from the infiltration of 'popular' representations of war, in part because, as her fellow panellists made clear, the best literature was not uninfluenced by veteran testimonies. The enemy wasn't at the gates: there were no gates at all, only a revolving door.<sup>196</sup> Hence Parr's willingness to lower the drawbridge, rhetorically speaking, between her (already creative) profession and the (historically informed) practice of war fiction. But of course, the interpenetrations were never going to mutually disengage, no matter what her opinion, so where was the use in stating it? Perhaps she banked on a sense of responsibility common to authors who make it their business to explore war-related topics before writing them up. Perhaps such people might appreciate an endorsement, a

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<sup>195</sup> The talk is freely accessible as a podcast, courtesy of Radio New Zealand. See

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/lecturesandforums/writers/20070228>

<sup>196</sup> On a related topic, the circulation of myths and their influence upon both wars and official histories is something Kevin Foster explores. See Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), p. 2.

complete lifting of the brakes on employing source material drawn from living subjects. Perhaps she thought they might do something interesting if they didn't hold back.<sup>197</sup>

Perhaps. If so, she was either highly instructive or uncannily prophetic, and did exemplary service as unofficial herald to Peter Wells, an Auckland-based writer and filmmaker who had made his name as one of New Zealand's foremost publicly gay novelists, memoirists, and short story writers. Plainly inspired by Parr's book, *Silent Casualties* (1995), Wells drew upon veteran testimony to produce *Lucky Bastard* (2007), New Zealand's first novel to take the travails of FEPOW's as a departure point, even as it questioned whether 'departure' was possible for those who had lived hand-to-mouth under the Japanese. Parr's own research had already illustrated that, as a general rule for POW's, New Zealand's postwar social mandate of 'moving on' was manifestly overoptimistic.<sup>198</sup> After all, the day-in-day-out routine of a POW typically involved the opposite: 'staying put' within barrack confines, a fact of life that banished mobility to the fantasies of the mind. When mobility finally arrived on the coattails of liberation the response was rapture and an effusive desire to return home – home, which was everything captivity wasn't: hugs instead of letters, a bed that was yours and always had been, signs in a language you could read, perhaps a sweetheart waiting for you, but, failing that, decent grub, plenty of pints down the pub, and a change into civvies as minimum. Good for a start. But behind the fulsomeness and platitudes, the mind could prove stubbornly resistant to throwing off its stockade habits, just as a caged bird happily flutters its wings when the door is opened only to feel a bizarre and apparently impossible vertigo. Not every

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197 In her published study, *Silent Casualties*, Alison Parr suggests that war fiction may perform a public service by anticipating the issues and concerns of returned servicemen in advance of (or perhaps instead of) the veterans' own efforts in this regard. By implication, writers of war fiction ought to avail themselves of the testimonies of those veterans whose experiences they purport to represent. See Alison Parr, *Silent Casualties: New Zealand's Unspoken Legacy of the Second World War* (North Shore City: Tandem Press, 1995), p. 21.

198 Just as Peter Wells is indebted to Alison Parr's work, so she benefits, in turn, from Jock Phillips' study of masculinity in New Zealand society, in which he cites war as a celebrated test of a (culturally constructed) manhood that exacts a price by narrowing the scope of permissible forms of public bereavement. Where returned servicemen are concerned, both researchers see a mutually reinforcing confluence between the inexpressible (in psychological terms, where individual veterans are concerned) and the impermissible (in socio-cultural terms, as regards public attitudes toward the expression of private injury). The upshot of this unfortunate arrangement is that veterans' families have sometimes shared and accommodated a form of suffering that has no sanctioned outlet elsewhere, which is one of the principal topics that concerns Peter Wells. See Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 192-98.

urge returns in the course of time. Where this proved the case, the predictable reaction was pent-up frustration and a punishing drive to match the freedom of body with an unshackled temperament. One tempting solution was to 'cut loose,' as J. G. Ballard does in the serial love affairs and car races that wind their way through his semi-autobiographical novel, *The Kindness of Women* (1991). But 'cutting loose' was not at all the same thing as 'moving on,' entailing as it did a compulsive repetition that suggested obsession over the reverse image of camp conditions. Less Sisyphean but just as headstrong was the urge to 'pull yourself together' and 'settle down,' substituting incarceration with domestication and building for oneself (and one's family) a new captivity with its own set of day-in-day-out routines.<sup>199</sup>

The repetitious habits and circumstances of the veteran, and especially the former POW, is a trend picked up on by Parr and elaborated by Wells, who takes it to its socially reproductive conclusion. In his novel, the phenomenon segues into a study of how children may unwittingly shoulder the burden of their father's memories (or their memories of his memories) and how, as adults looking back on their childhood, they confront the daunting task of untangling and retracing the historical moments that have gone into their making, partly with the help of oral testimony. We shall shortly take a close look at how intergenerational trauma plays out in the novel, but first something more is in order regarding the timeliness of recent oral history projects in New Zealand.

Oral histories, particularly military-oriented compilations, are appearing with increasing frequency in New Zealand, most of them pitched to the general public rather than an academic readership, all of them serving to enlarge our knowledge and imagination of New Zealanders at the time of the Second World War. Various institutions and objectives shape these works, but they invariably share two overarching concerns: most obviously, they are born of the eleventh-hour

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<sup>199</sup> The historian Ben Shephard describes how this took place: "In one case, a group of young, newly-qualified nurses sent to a hospital near Leeds found themselves treating men horribly tortured by the Japanese and some, moved by their suffering, married their patients, only to spend a lifetime as unpaid caregivers to men emotionally crippled by their experiences. In another case, a girl married an unknown man she had written to in the camps. In 1995, their daughter wrote of the 'daily drama played out within our family home, and perhaps replicated up and down the country, [which] meant that we as children also bore the scars of war.'" See Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists, 1914-1994* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p. 322.

realisation that, with every passing year, the total number of prospective interviewees steadily declines; less obviously, but implied on every page, is the attendant notion of testimony as something inherently individualised, a close-up perspective that stares over the horizon of the 'grand map' of strategic history. The hope is that we shall find ourselves caught up in these recollections, so that we no longer view New Zealand history as an appendage that is tagged onto other countries' narratives as an afterthought.<sup>200</sup> The historian, and perhaps the veteran too, may feel gratified in *Lucky Bastard*, since, if nothing else, it contains some poignant passages that reveal an appreciation for the power of oral testimony.

And, of course, it *is* a lot else: it is an attempt to depart from the confines of national history. To understand what I mean by this, consider how New Zealanders have typically approached the Pacific War in literary fiction. Before oral histories came on the scene, fiction writers tended to tread rather daintily, not so much unsure of their abilities as of their place in a field of memory already staked out according to what the country did in the war. National history, in other words, was as much a hindrance as a resource, and remaining tied to it left writers and their stories feeling like a bit of a sideshow. We have seen something of this in Errol Brathwaite's novel, which studiously avoids any portrayals of American-Japanese combat and focuses instead on the debate between captain Itoh and the village headman, Sedu. Another example, Vincent O'Sullivan's play, *Shuriken* (1985), provides the first literary illustration of Japanese and New Zealand military personnel coming face-to-face, though the story unfolds after the capture of Japanese by American soldiers and is thus at the tail end of a larger (northward) narrative.<sup>201</sup> Until recently, only Pat Booth's journalistic novel, *Sons of the Sword* (1993), took stock of the range and scale of experiences

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200 New Zealand histories have taken up this approach at certain times. In his history of POW's, for example, Wynne Mason writes, "Since our people usually shared most stages of their captivity with large numbers of other British Commonwealth captives, the conditions for British captives in general have often been given as a background against which to set the individual experiences of New Zealanders." See Wynne Mason, *Prisoners of War* (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1954), p. x.

201 The Japanese were kept at the Featherston prisoner of war camp following their capture during the Guadalcanal Campaign. Mike Nicolaidi and Eric Thompson provide a study of the Japanese experience of captivity in their book, *The Featherston Chronicles: a legacy of war* (Auckland: HarperCollins, 1999).

that the Pacific War brought to (and became for) New Zealanders, skilfully threading tangential historical moments into a whole.

Absent from this roll call is any literary work that takes a solid look at how New Zealanders reflected on the war after hostilities ceased. The closest we come to that is Gordon Slatter's profile of a disgruntled, footloose, out-of-pocket veteran of the Italian Campaign in his novel, *A Gun in My Hand* (1959). Here we get a cold, hard look at a character whose vindictive, maladjusted nastiness is redeemed only by a talent for creative insults that borders on genius. On occasion, the socio-cultural mockeries are spot-on and we can only nod our heads in sad, shamefaced agreement, but more often one is struck dumb by the man's calumny. Slatter does not allow us any respite either, and just when we think his creation has bottomed out, he proves us wrong. Mercifully, perhaps, the effect of this onslaught carries with it the suspicion that, so striking is the man's condition, his social isolation must be indicative of exceptionality. Contrast that with James Jones' general valediction to the future of postwar veterans in *Whistle* (1978). Nowhere in New Zealand fiction do we get the barroom brawling, meaningless sexual conquests, unrepentant alcoholism, and dizzy anomie that Jones conjures forth. This is not to imply that Jones is guilty of a gratuitous, bestial indulgence that upright New Zealanders eschewed, since anyone familiar with *Whistle* knows that Jones handles his characters with extraordinary, almost regretful sympathy. But it is likely that the prim and proper New Zealand of the 1950's would not have been receptive to such a work, even had it been published earlier. The aberrancy, even rebelliousness contained in such writing would have spoken to a veteran condition that ran counter to public expectations. It drew the curtain on a taboo subject: the possibility that veterans might not have recovered as they ought to have done, and that sort of grouchy defeatism just wouldn't wash in New Zealand, not when Kiwis had so much to be getting on with. They were busy raising children, playing rugby, culling deer, and generally being content in their 'quarter acre pavlova paradise.'<sup>202</sup> If someone like Slatter insisted on digging up the

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<sup>202</sup> The phrase 'quarter acre pavlova paradise' was introduced by British writer Austin Mitchell in his light-hearted take on New Zealand life and culture. See Austin Mitchell, *The Half Gallon Quarter Acre Pavlova Paradise* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1972).

past, then so be it. But far better to stick to the war years and ripsnorting tales of daring-do, as Brathwaite did in his first novel, *Fear in the Night* (1959). Pluck, heroism, mateship, that's what people wanted, not navel-gazing. Admittedly, this route did tend to leave creative writers on a sticky wicket: understandably, they felt the need to write 'the New Zealand story' of the Pacific War. But how was that likely to turn out? Nobody had any clear notion of what the New Zealand contribution had been – not, at least, in a way that would command immediate recognition from the reader. So writers nibbled away at the edges of the war, hamstrung by the 'bittiness' of the national contribution. In the European theatre, as they well knew, there had been plenty to write home about (and keep on writing about afterwards) but in the Pacific there were only token actions, mainly on Mono Island and Vella Lavella.

New Zealand's marginal geographical position, initially advantageous to the allies during the war years, had led to correspondingly marginal combat roles, and, in turn, to fiction writers who felt they had little to work with. This plaintive hand-wringing might never have ended had oral history not loosened the fetters somewhat. Having already ventured outside the library, or, more accurately, taken the world of veteran memory *as* a library, oral historians sidestepped the national narrative in favour of individual storytelling on an individual's terms, leaving nationality and nationalism on the veteran's doorstep, to be picked up, or not, according to preference.<sup>203</sup> No longer was it necessary, if creative writers followed this route, to remain 'attached' to the grand narratives of British and American origin. Instead, writers became caretakers of testimony and the nuanced meanings drawn from it in everyday life, a project that dovetailed with disclosing the trauma that testimonies may contain or evoke. That is what we see happening in *Lucky Bastard*, a novel that shrugs off the encumbrances of national history like a baggy sweater, favouring instead

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203 Alison Parr's project fits within an established canon of World War II oral histories, the public recognition of which began in the United States with Studs Terkel's landmark compilation, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (1984). The phenomenon soon spread across the Pacific when New Zealand journalist David McGill published *P.O.W. The Untold Stories of New Zealanders as Prisoners of War* (1987). More recently, Megan Hutching has edited a series of oral history collections (with approving forewords by Helen Clark), including *Inside Stories: New Zealand POW's Remember* (2002) and *Against the Rising Sun: New Zealanders Remember the Pacific War* (2006).



the nonlinear strings of traumatic memory and testimony. The result is by no means straightforward. Crisscrossing, tangling, hanging threads, and emergency patchwork are all in evidence, along with sudden jolts of cumulative static that remind us not to get too complacent: there is no point of easy release from the pain of memory, and it can return to us ('upon us' puts it better) at the most unpredictable moments. Safe to say that this is not a novel that seeks to put history to rest, rather it shows the unrest that takes place when families confront the history within.

None of these tensions are readily apparent, however, at first glance. In fact, the novel's opening scenes are decidedly unambiguous, with a hardboiled flavour that might remind us of Joseph Kanon's *The Good German* (2001). Both Kanon and Peter Wells see the bombed-out, sepia-toned urban landscape as a fertile setting for intrigue, murder, betrayal, and moral despair. But whereas Kanon wrote with sympathy of German suffering under the Occupation, Wells has little to say about the character or plight of individual Japanese. Of much greater interest to him are the struggles and factional disagreements between the Occupation powers in postwar Japan, a topic seldom recalled in American history or literature, and one which has come to light only recently in New Zealand scholarship.<sup>204</sup> At issue is whether or not leniency ought to prevail during the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, a tricky matter given the need to shore up allies in a Cold War that had already, abruptly arrived.

Wells positions these political squabbles as unfinished business that will cast a baleful shadow over what follows, and, on cue, the Japan-based story truncates and surrenders the stage to contemporary Auckland. There, on the streets of New Zealand's largest city, the significance of the great power politicking of World War II has long since receded into the realms of private memory and, more mysteriously, family secrecy. The hardboiled thriller duly transitions into a slower, more sedate literary form that strolls down memory lane with nary a thought to destinies caught in the

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<sup>204</sup> For a published study of New Zealand's role in the Occupation, see Laurie W. Brocklebank, *Jayforce: New Zealand and the Military Occupation of Japan, 1945-48* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997).

balance, unless one counts keeping family tempers in check. Acting as our narrator-guides are Ross and Alison, sibling rivals who make life difficult for one another even as they join forces to re-assemble the fragmented story of Eric, a former war crimes investigator who also happens to be their father. This task, already no small thing, is made harder by their own condition as survivors of Eric's less-than-perfect parenting, a recurrent theme in New Zealand literature, as anyone familiar with Janet Frame's *Intensive Care* (1970) knows well. In Frame's novel, the repressed, coiled spring of a father's war memories impacts upon his family with disfiguring force, and both writers see the mutilation process as irreversible. But whereas Frame treated her characters as manifestations of an abstract self-destructive (latterly apocalyptic) human tendency that enlarges with every passing era, Peter Wells is interested in the counteractive tendencies that impel us to make sense of violence, even where we find in it a history senseless to contemporary minds. The author's exhaustive prewriting mobilised to structure this quest, perhaps overtly so, and the result is a novel that feels at times like an archive narrative as Ross and Alison journey through multiple social and scholarly contexts.<sup>205</sup> Theirs is a quest with a dead-end, however, for whether at meetings, in museums, on television, or on holiday, they never uncover the meaning and origin of the childhood pain they carry. Instead, each context insists upon its own primacy in its own monoglot, and contributes toward a series of contending points of view that serve only to undermine one another, making irresolution a given.

The author's unwillingness to fixate upon a single moment of violence, historically speaking, represents a distinct break in the traditional structure of FEPOW narratives, which, as we have seen, tend toward a structure that is centred around violence and the binary opposition of captor and captive. Wells' novel steers clear of this paradigm, offering only backward glances toward captivity and deliberately eschewing any notion of a reliable, 'original' standpoint. In this relativistic

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205 As most war fiction writers are wont to do, Peter Wells draws upon a wealth of research undertaken prior to writing, and the investment in this process exercised a strong influence upon the novel. In an article, Wells reveals that he examined books, official records, and photographs, and also visited former camp sites in Borneo. See Peter Wells, "Unravelling the atrocities of war," *Sunday Star Times*, 28 October 2007.

knowledge landscape, only one thing remains sacrosanct: the fact of wartime atrocities as an experience that defies comparison. Wells treats this topic with corresponding delicacy and perhaps a little uncertainty, an inevitable, indeed wholly necessary attribute to the writing of atrocity. The few clues we receive that atrocities did occur are shrouded in a mixture of stylistic hesitancy and narrative mystery, as we see when Ross recalls a childhood conversation with his father's mistress. Though he is the son of a traumatised veteran, Ross is full of youthful inquisitiveness, particularly around the matter of what lies within a box of documents:

'Is it something to do with eating humans?'

She looked at me sharply. Then her face creased into amusement. She ashed the sagging end of her cigarette, brought it to her mouth, sucked in with a thorough sense of enjoyment. As she breathed out a warm fug of smoke, she said, half laughingly, 'You've been reading too many war comics, love!'<sup>206</sup>

This passage reflects the tenor of the novel as a whole in its tendency to withhold information, even (perhaps especially) when readers feel they would lose nothing by learning of it sooner. Later, we learn that Eric did in fact encounter stories of cannibalism in his capacity as war crimes investigator, but the novel shies from disclosing this immediately and thereby complicates our sense of who or what is being protected: is it the child from the story or the story from the reader? Wells assumes in each case that the recipient has an overfull stock of images and source material, such that the testimonial risks what Jenny Edkins terms the 'gentrification' of trauma.<sup>207</sup> To prevent the FEPOW experience from seeming everyday, Wells edges around or otherwise 'encircles' it, imparting a sense of significance through this act of hesitancy.

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206 ———, *Lucky Bastard* (Auckland: Random House, 2007), p. 168.

207 Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 15.

The tactic may at first glance seem obtuse, but its very necessity intersects with ongoing scholarly discussions over the need to maintain and / or recover value in stories of traumatic experience that are likely to disseminate among the general public. In his discussion regarding the necessity of ‘empathic unsettlement,’ theorist Dominick LeCapra has noted that the “post-traumatic response of unsettlement becomes questionable when it is routinized in a methodology or style that enacts compulsive repetition, including the compulsively repetitive turn to the aporia, paradox, or impasse.”<sup>208</sup> Historians and novelists must take care, in this respect, that admissions to the inadequacy of language, apropos the traumatic experience and the traumatised condition, do not become part of a reflexive dismissal or trope of the unspeakable. Since *Lucky Bastard* takes on a position of silence regarding Eric’s experiences, this tendency is a present danger. Yet Wells never says that Eric’s trauma is unspeakable, nor does he let the matter rest at silence. At its heart, the novel contains a lacuna, for what happened to Eric remains largely closed to us apart from what his children glean from their sometimes delicate, sometimes blunt-edged rummaging. In short, it is through the investigatory mode rather than a captivity narrative that we acquire a sense, if not an understanding, of what Eric’s experiences have meant for him and his family. The investigations take us away from ‘comic book’ pastiche, in which ‘what actually happened’ unfolds as smoothly as the classic filmic depictions of FEPOW captivity. What we glean instead is trauma’s capacity to cross generational boundaries, its location within sites of official memory, and a sense, though never a full disclosure, of the nature of that trauma.

The bulk of the story, then, is preoccupied with the siblings’ reconsideration of what Eric means and has meant to them. Sites of public memory facilitate this re-examination, albeit frequently through antithetical provocations against which the characters’ own feelings become alternately reinforced and weakened. As Ross and Alison negotiate these sites, the novel reaches for a resounding sense of trauma’s influence upon the family unit even as it disturbs any possibility of

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208 Dominick LeCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 47.

‘truth’ in an absolute sense. These two projects, as we shall see, are not wholly complementary and the challenge of achieving a balanced attention between trauma recovery and historical discovery remains central throughout. It is essential to realise here that the recovery *of* trauma, in the sense of a recovered topic of interest, becomes bound to the recovery *from* trauma, in the psychiatric sense of a subject who suffers the debilitating symptoms associated with the condition. As Ross and Alison navigate the sites in which remembrance takes place, so they unveil the meaningfulness of the FEPOW experience not just to the reader but also to themselves. In the process, they come to realise that trauma is a condition they carry as well as investigate.

In itself, such a realisation is quite enough to be going on with. But Wells adds a combative dimension to the siblings’ journey, born of the unpleasant knowledge that institutions devoted to public history, though stimulating and, in fact, indispensable to their purpose, may inadvertently complicate and even detract from the value that is placed on private memories. The private memories ‘in question’ are, by their nature, dear to Ross and Alison, remaining, in a sense, sacrosanct to the individual and decidedly not open to criticism. But sites of public memory, to the contrary, are, by their profusion, inherently pluralistic in their approach to specific events, which may include particular perspectives akin to the visitor’s, but only as part of a larger collective that decentralises any one point of view. In short, the act of historical discovery promoted through such places comes to both inform (via prompts) and disrupt (via counter narrative) the meaning attached to individual memory. Thus, even as the novel reaches for a realisation of trauma’s meaningfulness, that same meaning becomes destabilised within a social and critical milieu unreceptive to any master narrative.

Before we examine this tension more closely, we first need to pay close attention to those scenarios in which memories return seamlessly, without any sense of contestation. The author is clearly drawn to the power of such moments, among the most arresting of which takes places when

Alison, nominally a London business executive, visits the War Memorial Museum in Auckland and experiences the power of recorded testimony:

Inward she went, disappearing like a spot of light on a computer shutting down. Only the old bloke's voice existed. And she was surprised to find her face damp. She was betrayed. She was crying silently.

It was the modesty of the man's voice. He was talking about the most devastating pain and fright a human was capable of sustaining while staying alive. But with a asthmatic draw-in of breath, the old codger would only allow such modest phrases as, 'Yes, well, it got a bit rough around there' (his mates killed) and, for what sounded like a life ruined by post-traumatic stress syndrome, 'I don't know. I couldn't get it out of my head, you see. Silly what you think of. What you can't stop thinking about.' Long pause. 'But that's life, isn't it?'<sup>209</sup>

The disembodied voice comes through the headphones and into the novel as if from nowhere, striking a chord in Alison whose responsiveness entails a 'shutdown' of mental resistance, in large part because the man is fundamentally unassertive. Such a person, coherent but self-effacing, is beyond her reckoning. In more typical situations, Alison prefers statements that set her up for a snappy, hightoned riposte, but here all she gets is the bashfulness of an 'old codger' holding forth in his own way. A partly self-administered *coup de grâce* of this sort is an unwelcome, perhaps even shameful moment of human weakness for a corporate jetsetter like her, but it is understandable.<sup>210</sup> So marked is the old man's restraint that he barely registers the enormity of what he has gone through, and almost appears to be speaking of another person's life. Holocaust trauma psychiatrist Dori Laub makes clear how survivors reach this state, and the implications for the listener:

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<sup>209</sup> Wells, *Lucky Bastard*, p. 230.

<sup>210</sup> Researching this novel contained similar moments of realisation for Wells, though he made his ambivalence clear in an interview: "Now one appreciates [the war generation's] stoicism and modesty and civility. But actually growing up with them – with someone who doesn't talk, finds difficulty in expressing emotions – isn't necessarily an easy experience." See Philip Matthews, "A visitor from Hawke's Bay," *New Zealand Listener*, 5 October 2007, p. 36.

Massive trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction. The victim's narrative – the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma – does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence. [...]

By extension, the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. The relation of the victim to the event of the trauma, therefore, impacts on the relation of the listener to it, and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that the trauma victim feels. He has to address all these, if he is to carry out his function as listener...<sup>211</sup>

As the listener in this case, Alison bears witness to events *reflected in* but not *known to* the testifier, and her tears manifest symptoms that, by all rights, ought to be the old man's but, because of his emotional disconnection, become hers to cry on his behalf. Hereafter, she herself bears witness to what others cannot, although, interestingly enough, she cannot articulate or express the meaning of her own childhood trauma. To get a sense of what that involved, her character becomes part of a still larger project that invites the reader to do as she did in the museum – for just as the recorded testimony touches off emotions within her, so Alison begins to recall memories that she has never fully registered. Thus some of the novel's most disturbing scenes leave it to the reader to perform an act of witnessing that the characters cannot.

This dynamic comes into play most obviously when Alison hazily recalls a childhood game she played with her brother after they ransacked Eric's box of war crimes documents. As attentive readers, we know that they have subjected themselves to information about the massacre of

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211 Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 57.

Australians at Six Mile Road, but their awareness is at the level of play and therefore incomplete. Just as the old man's audio recording feels peculiarly detached from the core of his experience, so Alison's memory is shocking in its deadpan narration of the re-enactment she and Ross undertook:

I poured the petrol on (cold water from our hose). He screamed like a girl. I grinned as I watered him all over. He was meant to be dead, anyway, but being Ross he managed to stay alive, to enjoy the pain more deeply. He groaned and moaned, his lids half open, begging me to finish him off. But it was my delight to imagine striking a match.

'BOOM!' I yelled as the flames flickered all over his body. I watched, between half-closed lids, as his flesh fell off, in flakes, straight from the bone. And it was me who ate him. He was tasty, that kid.<sup>212</sup>

Providing a refracted glimpse of the atrocity, the sensory imagery draws us into the text and encourages us to speculate as to what it is the children imitate. Certainly we are unlikely to pass off their behaviour as the product of a healthy, albeit ghoulish childhood imagination. Much more is at work here, traceable to Eric's box, the contents of which remain closed to us, though its effect upon the inquisitive young explorers gives us a nasty suspicion. Textually speaking, the box is no longer simply a box, but symbolic of the traumatised mind – locked away, hidden, carefully approached, destructive once opened, and shattering in the long term. Naturally, the children open the box, as children must always do if they wish to go through the wardrobe, down the rabbit hole, or on the yellow brick road, but instead of a fantasyland what lies in wait is an unnameable 'something' that impresses them with the image of atrocity. Afterwards, like an organ grinder's monkey, they follow a routine that has all the appearance of recreation, but is, in fact, a literal 're-creation.' As witnesses to this horrendous spectacle, we see the impossibility of disentangling a present-day adult subjectivity from a childhood experience, the traumatic nature of which defies containment,

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212 Wells, *Lucky Bastard*, p. 373-74.



challenge, or transcendence.<sup>213</sup> To 'think outside the box' is impossible, even retrospectively, and the temptation is to grant ourselves a position of lofty detachment, having surmised Alison's condition based on nothing more complex than a 'cause-effect' conjunction. But we need to take a humble step back and realise that, of course, we only ever observe her memories through speculative, fragmentary guesswork. More importantly still, memories of trauma never proceed in the linear fashion of an unsolved mathematical equation. On the contrary, the bearer most often remains in a state of suspension, and to reduce that condition to 'cause' is to dissociate ourselves from that ongoing disconnection. If we wish to participate fully in the meaning-generating process, we need to respect and take account of the disconnection itself, as well as its abstract origins, a process that allows us to perceive the past events – receive them, in fact – on behalf of the testifier. The shared nature of this enterprise is what Dori Laub identifies when he states that, "It is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener, which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing. This joint responsibility is the source of the re-emerging truth."<sup>214</sup>

Were *Lucky Bastard* solely about witnessing, Wells would have depicted a society gradually coming to terms with veterans, the forms of captivity they endured, and those family members who endure on their behalf. These facets are readily discernible, provided that characters and readers listen carefully to what is said. However, Peter Wells is just as interested in the conflicts that take place when testimony and listening take place under less favourable, even hostile conditions. A seminal example of the damage this does to the testifier comes across when Ross agrees to a televised interview, knowing that the show addresses his father's role as a Tokyo war crimes investigator, but not knowing that the show's host, Rebecca Bright, is decidedly interrogatory. As

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213 As trauma theorist Cathy Caruth puts it, "The flashback or traumatic re-enactment conveys, that is, both the truth of an event, and the truth of its incomprehensibility." See Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 153.

214 Dori Laub, "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 69.

the interview progresses, Rebecca unleashes broadsides of background information before asking whether Eric ever talked about his past. Ross' answer is terse and defensive:

'No, he didn't. And he's not in a fit state any more to answer questions. I don't see your point.'

'My point, Ross, is this: an innocent man may have been sent to his death by your father as an act of revenge. Your father won a medal and has been praised as a hero. War is messy, we know that, but we have to fight through the murk of the past – to find the truth.' She left an eloquent silence for a moment, then turned straight to the camera. 'Never forget this, folks. *If there's a story, we'll find it!*'

'I understand that,' I said, furious. 'But maybe you –'

The cameraman took his head away from the camera.

'– maybe you should think of doing a programme on the psychological and physical after-effects of captivity by the Japanese on prisoners of war.'

'Oh we did that ages ago. Didn't we, Anne?'<sup>215</sup>

Finding that the FEPOW story is done and dusted, so to speak, Ross backs into a corner and responds with a hostility that comes naturally to the situation. But he fights a losing battle. Rather than facilitating testimony, the entertainment community manufactures it through a process of interrogation that is tantamount to non-listening or outright silencing. Crushingly determined to get to the bottom of Eric's past behaviour, Rebecca increasingly marginalises Ross' testimony in pursuit of her ends. This 'truth,' as she terms it, is very different from the 're-emerging truth' that Dori Laub considered so essential to the process of hearing testimony, and that he had in mind when noting that it can be more useful, on occasion, not to know too much when receiving the message of the

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215 Wells, *Lucky Bastard*, p. 319-20.

trauma victim.<sup>216</sup> Facts can prove harmful to trauma testimonies, which demand that they be heard on their own terms, and Wells' portrayal of the predatory interviewer dismissing her subject for want of confirmatory information is a case in point. Sometimes history is forged by wringing out the very people who have struggled to survive it.

Rebecca is at once distasteful and painfully familiar, a mass-produced personality for a mass-produced television show, and someone whose razzmatazz is guaranteed to get good ratings. Yet Wells does not, indeed cannot dismiss her out of hand, for she is a sign of the times, an outgrowth of a generalised social malaise that precludes any one particular narrative pride of place. Positioned alongside her are historical perspectives too numerous to order, all of which serve to shake the foundations of truth as an absolute. Across this harsh and unforgiving terrain, the trauma survivor wanders, like Diogenes looking for an honest man – looking, that is, for anyone or anything that can marry the truth of the survivor's condition to a sympathetic discourse. It is a wrenching process. On occasion, to be sure, Ross and Alison encounter sites of memory that facilitate their own (as in the museum) but then there are those situations that contest or ignore their condition (as in the television programme). Paradoxically though, the sheer multiplicity of discourses serves to provide the characters a better comprehension of the value they attach to their condition. In other words, even as Ross and Alison inhabit a social world that frustrates their efforts to reassemble their fragmented pasts, so the dichotomy reinforces their resolve (though it does not speed its resolution). By the end of the novel, they need all the resolve they can get, particularly since, in an ironic twist, the siblings start questioning each other's position as well. Alison has particular reason to take umbrage, having discovered that Ross is the author of a book manuscript sent to her anonymously, the title of which is *Lucky Bastard*.<sup>217</sup> The hardboiled rendition of Eric's time in Japan is not to her liking, mostly because Ross saucily portrays his father as bisexual, but their quarrel has wider

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<sup>216</sup> Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," p. 61.

<sup>217</sup> Wells, *Lucky Bastard*, p. 417.

ramifications than policing sexual boundaries. Up until this point, the reader can look back on the novel's first section as a reference point, but the revelation that a character authored it disturbs this reliance and deprives us of privileged knowledge. Characters, locations, author, and the novel's opening all exist in relation to one another, but devoid of hierarchical standards of knowledge value, meaning that no one picture of the past can predominate. Though we might expect that everything will 'slot into place,' the revelation that the novel's beginning is 'fictional' means that there is no absolute truth to recover. All that remains is for Alison and Ross to reconcile their need for trauma recovery with the impossibility of true knowledge in a world of competing discourses.

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Lehrer and Wells stand at the end of a continuum of literary artists dedicated to describing the FEPOW experience, and are thus the beneficiaries of a heritage that continues to exercise a powerful hold on the public imagination – or, to strike a different pose, theirs may represent waning efforts to blow on the dying embers of a literary form that has outworn itself. To understand the difficulties that beset those writers who take on the project of writing a FEPOW novel, we need to recall the form's literary history as well as contemporary trends in literature and scholarship that reflect and contribute to the socio-cultural environment into which new novels emerge. As the introduction to this chapter made clear, the high tide of attention to the FEPOW experience came in aftermath of liberation and repatriation, along with those first literary efforts to forge a captivity narrative. These initial forays, epitomised by Pierre Boulle's novel, were never separated from – nay, openly relied upon – longstanding cultural motifs of the Orientalist variety. Just as they have misrepresented those of Asian descent and/or nationality, so these motifs did damage to the veracity of the FEPOW narrative, an admittedly ironic result when we note how self-serving Orientalist discourse typically is. Yet it remains consistent. If we need convincing, let us recall the central premise of David Henry Hwang's play, *M. Butterfly* (1988), in which a French civil servant falls in love with a Chinese opera singer, apparently never realising that 'she' was really a 'he': we only see what we wish to see, and what that turns out to be usually comes to us through cultural (mis)representations. Boulle's story

was seductively deceptive also, and the first task of subsequent writers has been to extract the prisoner experience from this morass, not 'rehumanise' the captor.

That was challenging enough for the likes of James Clavell and J. G. Ballard, who created works of lasting authority partly because the grimness of their social worlds was so far removed from Boulle's topsy-turvy daydream. To these writers, Japanese guards and interrogators were only secondarily important – besides which, as they knew already, the general public had been well acquainted with Japanese atrocities in the onslaught of newspaper coverage in late 1945. Cases of actual or reported atrocity, to say nothing of more 'casual' mistreatments, made drawing sympathetic portrayals of the Japanese a signally difficult, if not impossible, task for all but a few. But steering clear of this unexplored avenue of representation has served to demarcate it, implicitly, as a quality noticeably absent in FEPOW literature, and therein lies the paradox facing FEPOW novels today. Literary inheritance has taken the form toward a point at which it is in danger of appearing one-dimensional, particularly in comparison with postcolonial and / or multicultural productions. To get the gist of the issue, let us turn again to the world of theatre. Though little known outside the United States, the work of Japanese American playwright Philip K. Gotanda deserves mention. Among his many plays, *Yankee Dawg You Die* (1991) provides a mournful illustration of the ways in which Hollywood typecasting has shepherded Asian American actors into unchallenging roles as houseboys, exotic dancers, fancy-dress monsters, and laughable, pidgin-speaking guards and interrogators. Gotanda's story is worth telling, because casting shapes the American and, to a varying extent, the Anglophone audience's expectations of what is brought to them on stage and screen – and, by extension, the casting opportunities for future generations of Asian American actors. While reading the script, though, I cannot help but think of British playwright Willis Hall's *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1959), another story that is worth telling. Set in Malaya in 1942, when things were at their worst for the British Army, the story involves a small patrol of soldiers who take captive a Japanese soldier. This latter character is a non-speaking role, and so would seem to bear out Gotanda's observations to the letter, in that here is a situation (war) and a person (East Asian)

that we have no difficulty associating with one another (result: a mute). Still and all, if we exercise our imaginations, or catch an actual performance, we would probably discover that the role is a good deal more demanding than it first appears, precisely because it is non-speaking. That does not put Gotanda in the wrong, nor can it exonerate the less sophisticated portrayals of East Asians that have poured out of Hollywood in particular. The point here is not to apologise on behalf of old-fashioned productions but rather to show how they have trouble finding their place within a contemporary social, political, and cultural milieu increasingly sensitive to the portrayals of foreign cultures and minorities.

Gotanda and Hall come from parallel universes, each capable of defining the 'other.' How might we imagine them in conversation, if such a thing could take place? Hall's play would point out that Gotanda has nothing to say about the imperative to portray historical situations that were fraught with national, racial, and cultural divisions (true enough). Gotanda's would retort that Hall has done nothing to advance our understanding of Japanese culture, nor provided anything out-of-the-ordinary for an Asian / Asian minority actor to encounter (also true). It might be a stretch too far to suggest that these perspectives are mutually incompatible, but certainly they represent rival political positions, the precise balance of which goes a long way toward determining the degree of attention each is likely to receive.<sup>218</sup> To judge from their near-absence in contemporary scholarship, it is FEPOW literature which currently appears 'unfitting' and we need to take this into account while reading Lehrer and Wells. Each writer places characters within situations that lead toward socio-cultural deracination, most obviously shown in the inconclusive ending to each novel. In *The Special Prisoner*, Watson functions as a vessel for perspectives that, in the first instance, recall Japanese atrocities as a worthy object for acts of forgiveness; and, in the second, take up counter discourses

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218 A short story collection by Sabina Murray illustrates the difficulty, and the creative rewards, of harmonising these positions. In "Guinea," two American G.I.'s take prisoner a Japanese, only to have him take sides in an argument about baseball. The consistent trend in Murray's collection is her fascination with people who occupy ethnic, cultural, or historical margins, a necessary corrective to the 'neatness' of more homogeneous portrayals, and one she carries off well – although one is always aware that hers are exceptional characters in every sense. See Sabina Murray, "Guinea," in *The Caprices*, ed. Sabina Murray (New York: Grove Press, 2002).

from the Japanese position. The novel's title pays heed to these distinctive views, for Watson is indeed held prisoner – by various pasts more than anything else, and he remains so until the very end, when suicide illustrates the impossibility of the human mind, and the novel describing it, to retain its balance. *Lucky Bastard*, by contrast, departs from the linearity of captivity narratives altogether. Instead, what takes place is an investigation into the nature of trauma and the multiplicity of sites where remembrance takes place. Ultimately, this landscape of overlapping discourses serves to level even the wartime narrative that begins the novel, which becomes one more of a series of testimonies and accounts. The de-sacralising nature of this process, which renders impossible any one master narrative, shows the novel's regard for the ways in which knowledge undergoes contestation.

## Chapter 4:

### Captive Memories

So powerfully did the whole grim aspect of Ahab affect me, and the livid brand which streaked it, that for the first few moments I hardly noticed that not a little of this overbearing grimness was owing to the barbaric white leg upon which he partly stood. It had previously come to me that this ivory leg had at sea been fashioned from the polished bone of the sperm whale's jaw. 'Aye, he was demasted off Japan,' said the old Gay-Head Indian once; 'but like his demasted craft, he shipped another mast without coming home for it. He has a quiver of 'em.'

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (p. 126)

The last chapter concluded that FEPOW narratives have struggled to retain their 'currency' in the liberal political environment of arts and humanities scholarship, and that fiction writers have responded by drawing away from captivity and investing in cognate topic areas such as intergenerational trauma and official apologies. Creative adaptation of this order signals the writers' willingness to take their subject matter away from stiffened artistic forms, but the practice also reinforces the impression of a story in decline, not just because of its discursive predilections, but because it no longer holds pre-eminence in the public understanding of captivity during the Pacific War. The fears associated with 'decline' bear thinking about when we encounter resistant attitudes, particularly those that seek to shore up the FEPOW story in the face of encroachments from 'alternative' narratives. At times, *The Special Prisoner* takes on a factionalist stance that plays into the hands of such sentiments, though the various 'twists' in the narrative ultimately render it too multifarious for a single mould. To perceive resistance in action, and the heated tempers that feed it, we



need to step briefly out of the confines of the written text and acknowledge its effect upon and reception within specific communities. As we have already seen, the bicentennial commemorations of 1995 involved several ‘performances,’ national and local, public and private, not a few of which were handicapped by the demands of special interest groups. In the next and final chapter, we shall return to one of these, the Smithsonian Exhibition, in more detail, but here I should like to draw attention to an equally expressive albeit lesser-known case study: the stage production of Vincent O’Sullivan’s play, *Shuriken* (1985). O’Sullivan’s is the only play to take the shooting of Japanese POW’s in 1943 as its subject matter, an incident that bore some resemblance to the Cowra Breakout in New South Wales, though in the New Zealand case the Japanese remained within their camp at Featherston and did not succeed in breaking out.<sup>219</sup> The play called for six actors to play the parts of Japanese prisoners, and in its first performance, these roles had fallen to local actors, there being few Japanese in New Zealand at the time. But in 1995 six Japanese actors flew to Hamilton, New Zealand, in the first of a two-stage cultural exchange that would culminate in a performance in Tokyo, with no less than the former Japanese commanding officer in attendance. Given the specificities of timing, casting, and staging, it was inevitable (and entirely intended) that the preproduction of the play would be conscious of the power of drama to deepen intercultural understanding or reopen old wounds. In fact, as the production progressed, it became apparent that both results were likely, at least to some degree, for that which made the play appropriate, namely its capacity to present a captivity narrative from an historical base grounded in the Japanese prisoner experience, also made

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219 The Featherston and Cowra incidents involved two altercations, in February 1943 and August 1944, respectively, each of which began as acts of resistance from the Japanese prisoners-of-war toward their guards. The events are frequently cited in Australasian scholarship as pivotal instances in which the differences between Japanese and allied cultures, or between the military codes of the same, became insurmountable. Circumstantial differences warrant attention. The Featherston incident began with a sit-down strike that escalated into violence after guards fired warning shots, whereas at Cowra the Japanese executed a mass breakout in which 359 prisoners of war escaped. Those who survived were all recaptured over the course of ten days.

it most objectionable to some parties, surviving allied FEPOW's foremost among them. To these aged veterans, the recalcitrance of Japanese officials when it came to public apologies rendered the play, as well as a proposed Peace Garden adjacent to the site of the original shooting, signally inappropriate. After strong opposition from the Returned and Services' Association (RSA), plans for the latter were shelved by the local council, although the play managed to proceed and drew public acclaim in Hamilton and Tokyo, a fleeting but heart-warming salute to the war generation on both sides of the Pacific.<sup>220</sup>

The controversies that surrounded the performance passed from public attention in due course, but their basis remained unchanged. Quite apart from the issue of formal Japanese apologies, ex-FEPOW's disliked the idea of marking the fiftieth anniversary with a story that presented New Zealanders as bigoted, possibly trigger-happy camp guards. The picture was unflattering to say the least, but worse still was the realisation that, if one approached the Pacific War from an ignorant, possibly indifferent position, one might leave the auditorium carrying an impression of New Zealanders as perpetrators first and foremost. In other words, ex-FEPOW's were motivated by a sense that their own stories were 'losing ground' in the face of antinationalistic or 'Japanese-oriented' tales of captivity that were better suited to the expediency of political gestures abroad and cultural pluralism at home. Nothing, however, about the play's production necessarily rendered the FEPOW story redundant, and, after all, why not embrace both stories? The question sounds reasonable enough but it conceals a painful, unacknowledged truism seldom confronted in humanities scholarship: namely, that writers, artists, and public intellectuals who seek to shed light on particular episodes of captivity often deflect attention, no matter how unintentionally, from

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<sup>220</sup> Much of the background detail I have provided here benefits from a television documentary that chronicles the 1995 production. See Steve La Hood, "Shuriken: prisoners of culture," (New Zealand 2009).

parallel histories of captivity involving other groups of prisoners enduring their own particular social, political, legal, cultural, or material hardships. All too often, that is, captivity narratives are bisected, cordoned off, *interned*, in fact, within the particular (often ethnic-national) agenda of the writer. To a certain extent, of course, this is to be expected. The first writers of FEPOW narratives and the first writers of Japanese American internment narratives both had direct exposure to the experiences they represented, and thus wrote of that which was most immediate to them. Florence Crannell Means' *The Moved-Outers* (1945), Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953), Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973), and Yoshiko Uchida's *Desert Exile* (1982) all fall into this category, each of which unfolds in a predictable sequence of events. Literary scholars Fu-Jen Chen and Su-Lin Yu have drawn attention to this linear quality, suggesting that the majority of Japanese American internment literature relies on the temporal and the sequential at the expense of underscoring the spatial landscapes in which internment actually took place.<sup>221</sup>

In this chapter, I should like to extend the geographical radius of this criticism and address the manner in which Anglophone Japanese civilian/minority internment narratives reach for, or avoid, an awareness of their interrelationship with the stories of Pacific War combat veterans. By framing this investigation within the controversy that surrounded the 1995 performance of *Shuriken*, I hope it is now apparent that publications or performances about underrepresented (or otherwise captive) groups of people during the war years may serve the political and cultural interests of survivors and descendants, but may also act to displace the concomitant interests of veterans groups and their cultural artefacts. Let me be clear that I do not suggest that scholars must necessarily take sides or act as advocates of

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221 Fu-jen Chen and Su-lin Yu, "Reclaiming the Southwest: A Traumatic Space in the Japanese American Internment Narrative," *Journal of the Southwest* 47, no. 4 (2005): p. 555.

one group over the other, even though, in practice, this does tend to be the rule. My intention is rather to pay special attention to those literary fictions that seek to accommodate stories relating to more than one form of captivity (what I term a 'multimodal' approach) or to the combat veteran's story alongside that of the civilian/minority internee. Such fictions cannot sustain an overtly liberal or conservative political partisanship, but must instead strike a balance, if not necessarily an accord, between the respective communities. Answering this need with a literary style that can accommodate the recovered histories of veteran and former internee constitutes, in my opinion, the defining quality of my two sources, David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1994) and Wendy Catran's *The Swap* (2004). Admittedly, the congruence may be hard to perceive at first glance, though that is as likely attributable to the difference in their target readership and in the literary history backed up behind the two novels. Guterson benefits from a lineage of literary efforts that seek to deepen public awareness of Japanese American internment, whereas Catran stands alone as the first author to draw attention to internment in New Zealand. Also, like a good number of the earliest Japanese American publications, Catran writes for young adults, and so the fairest comparison would more properly match her work with, say, Means' *The Moved-Outers*.<sup>222</sup> But unlike early Japanese American writing, Catran shows an awareness of the ways in which Pacific War veteran memories may come into conflict with memories of internment. To be sure, writers like Uchida had known this also, but Uchida manifested her awareness in narratives that underemphasised the suffering of Japanese Americans, the better to avoid drawing attention to a community that had already endured enough. Her novels, like her autobiography, were intended to reintegrate Japanese Americans gently into a general

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222 For a cursory overview of Wendy Catran's young adult writing, see Doreen Darnell, "Author Profile: Wendy Catran," *Talespinner* 19(2005).

public awareness without presenting a list of grievances. Catran does not impose any such restraints on her writing, mainly because there are no groups of former internees or their descendants living in New Zealand. Her writing therefore contains no power to advance any socio-political agenda in relation to the internment community she describes, addressing instead a readership that is wholly unaware of the histories or peoples in question. These qualities place Catran's writing in a different category from early Japanese American equivalents, and so too does her willingness to use the figure of the Pacific War veteran as the bearer of a competitive discourse, often sullenly resistant but also commanding our sympathy on his own terms.

Guterson and Catran put the internee and the veteran in conversation, although more often than not this encounter leads to withdrawn silences that function to underscore the political and individual divisions between the two parties. The reader cannot help but notice these moments, as the thrust and cadence of the prose tend to come up short with an abruptness that is startling. We are left to wonder at the origin of these 'breaks,' and thus the challenge facing both writers is to map out life stories in a way that does justice to the characters' damaged subjectivity. Above all, this involves taking us toward a moment or 'place' in which we can observe the essential brokenness of the former internee and veteran, a journey that can plug some of the gaps in our understanding, but not all.<sup>223</sup> With clearly demarcated temporal distinctions like 'then' and 'now,' a linear narrative runs counter to the nuances of this project. Instead, Guterson and Catran employ shifts in character perspective, juxtaposed moments in time, and deliberate confusions in the narrator's subjectivity, qualities that literary scholar Anne Whitehead has identified as

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223 In her study of Asian American writing, Patti Duncan has noted that some writers do attempt a 'gap-filling' project that addresses the omissions within mainstream histories, but others prefer to leave pointed silences that serve political agendas. See Patti Duncan, *Tell This Silence: Asian American Women Writers and the Politics of Speech* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), p. viii.

‘trauma fiction,’ a body of work that confronts the reader with non-traditional modes of narration whilst seeking to re-establish a meaningful connection with the past.<sup>224</sup> By this route, we come to sense the weight of meaning backed up behind the silences of the veteran and the former internee, and to better appreciate the ways in which their silences attempt to cancel each other out. Even so, our sensitisation is not, and can never be, ‘complete,’ for the characters themselves represent distinctive literary traditions that are resistant to closure. In her seminal study, King-Kok Cheung has described how Asian American writers have used an ‘articulate silence’ as a way to communicate meaningfully, or otherwise register the imposition of silence upon them:

The writers question the authority of language (especially language that passes for history) and speak to the resources as well as the hazards of silence. They articulate – question, report, expose – the silences imposed on themselves and their peoples, whether in the form of feminine and cultural decorum; external or self-censorship, or historical or political invisibility; at the same time they reveal, through their own manners of telling and through their characters, that silences – textual ellipses, nonverbal gestures, authorial hesitations (as against moral, historical, religious, or political authority) – can also be articulate.<sup>225</sup>

But if silences can be articulate, there are other forms that speak to the incapacity of the subject to communicate meaningfully, even where communication is frequently attempted and most desired. This is the condition Trevor Dodman has identified in his analysis of Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), where “narration functions as a prosthesis

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224 Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 81-2.

225 King-Kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 3.

meant to stave off a sense of the self as a disarticulated scar.”<sup>226</sup> While an articulate silence may communicate nonverbally in lucid and coherent ways, war veterans more often suffer under ‘enforced silences’ that register “the disruptive workings of traumatic memories aggressively imposing themselves on the survivor.”<sup>227</sup> These two forms of silence comprise wholly different practices and subjective conditions; in one we see an individual who communicates well, if s/he chooses to, but through such verbal economy as to seem, to those unfamiliar with the practice, devoid of meaning; the other reveals a subject whose preference is to communicate verbally but whose self, shattered or partially maimed through exposure to combat or atrocity, cannot find expression adequate to impart meaning or provide relief.

In both novels, the veteran and the ethnic Japanese minority employ (as a standard communicative preference) or resort to (through no other choice) forms of silence that either speak to their individual conditions or comment upon ‘the other’s’ (perceived) identity. It is in the meeting ground, or lack thereof, between these silences that the novels generate political stances in respect to the reformulation of (inter)national histories. We shall shortly pay closer attention to this process in both novels, but first a few words on the nature of New Zealand’s internment of Japanese civilians are necessary, not to affirm or contest the depictions Catran provides, but to provide some basis for understanding why Catran writes out of an historical vacuum that thus far remains unchallenged. Thanks to historical and literary efforts spearheaded in the United States, we know a considerable amount about Japanese American internment and quite a bit about the internment of Japanese Canadians. On the other hand, we know only a smattering about internment in

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226 Trevor Dodman, ““Going All to Pieces”: A Farewell to Arms as Trauma Narrative,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 52, no. 3 (2006): p. 250.

227 Ibid.: p. 251.

the rest of the Americas and nothing at all about what took place on the small islands of the South Pacific. In what follows, we shall piece together clues about the latter using published histories that, until now, have invariably been concerned with other matters.

### **Internment in New Zealand**

When President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorising the internment of over 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, the evacuation took place within full view of the general public. Notices appeared informing people of the decision, sympathetic neighbours rallied round to offer support, avaricious fortune hunters preyed on the vulnerable, photographic journalists took shots as trains carried people away, and, before the war was over, fiction writers staked out political stances in respect to the phenomenon. Among the latter, Alan Hynd asserted in *Betrayal from the East: The Inside Story of Japanese Spies in America* (1943), that the internment was justified, and drew pictures of a Japanese immigrant population that had entrenched itself in the fabric of American society, primarily as a means to cause mischief through industrial sabotage and guerrilla activity. Representing a contrarian discourse were writers like Florence Crannel Means, who imagined their subjects as family units rather than sleeper cells and emphasised their helpless incredulity toward the War Relocation Authority. Even as the internment process was in effect, therefore, American civilians encountered cultural productions that invited them to take up a political position in respect to the phenomenon. In the South Pacific, on the other hand, the situation could hardly have been more different. There it was entirely possible, indeed it was an almost universal rule to have never heard about the treatment of Japanese beyond the ongoing saga of military campaigning. Now and then there were references in the newspapers to the Japanese prisoners of war at Featherston, but nobody



heard tell of another camp somewhere else. The studied indifference toward the compromised status of local human rights, which most civilians acknowledged as a necessary part of the war effort, goes some way toward explaining the lack of awareness.<sup>228</sup> But more significant by far was the manner and degree to which Japanese civilians experienced internment in New Zealand, which differed markedly to that which took place in the United States.

To appreciate the political, social, and economic position of Japanese civilians and minorities living in migrant communities during the mid-1940's, we need to enquire into the historical trends that led to the first waves of migration. In large migrant populations, perhaps exceeding a thousand or more, the researcher's task is eased along somewhat by the existence of private missives, family photographs, heirlooms, diaries, and other memorabilia that communities preserve once they have established themselves. These materials constitute essential sources that, placed alongside public records and published texts, provide some idea of the original motivating factors that led to the migrations, and also aid our understanding of the challenges and hardships that took place in specific destinations. However, when it comes to those Japanese who ventured southward beyond the latitude of Micronesia we find the population numbers trailing off to such levels that descendants become increasingly thin on the ground, if not absent altogether, while documentary mention of the original migrants is scanty and unenlightening. As a result, historical recognition of the trends and peoples involved has tended to relegate the migrant Japanese to footnotes, an afterthought to the visualisation of Japan's military presence in the South Pacific. In my attempt to reinstate the communities into their original pre-war locations, historically speaking, I have found it necessary to pluck selective scraps of

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<sup>228</sup> Nan Taylor, "Human Rights in World War II in New Zealand," *The New Zealand Journal of History* 23, no. 2 (1989): p. 109.

information from studies that are concerned with parallel trends, and then bridge the gaps with speculation, an admittedly imperfect and subjective methodology that awaits the remedial touches of scholars whose time, resources, and air mileage credits extend further than mine. The latter would be especially handy, given the most significant fact of Japanese internment in New Zealand, namely that the majority of internees had not been based in New Zealand at all, but rather on the islands of Fiji and Tonga. This in itself is curious, as New Zealand's greater land mass, industrial development, and benign climate would seem to make it an attractive prospect for Japanese immigration, but for all its advantages New Zealand never penetrated the Japanese consciousness in the way that Hawai'i and the west coast of the United States did. One can guess at the reasons by examining the demographics. Prior to the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907, which restricted the flow of U.S.-bound Japanese migrants to women and temporary residents, most Japanese entered their host countries either as labourers, who hoped for better prospects abroad than the tenant farming at home, or patriotic adventurers looking for 'lessons' to inform Japan's modernisation process.<sup>229</sup> To qualify as a worthwhile labour market, destinations had to have an industry in which Japanese workers might do well, and then, as news of work conditions reached home, establish a reputation that might encourage others to venture forth. In these respects, Pacific islands were found wanting. First of all, most islands, with the exception of Micronesia, did not offer much in the way of prospects or incentives for that crucial first wave of labour. Then too, when arrangements did take place for workers to try their hand at specific projects, the outcome was not encouraging. For example, in the 1890's, the Australian firm, Burns, Philip & Company, suggested that Japanese workers

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<sup>229</sup> For an examination of Japanese labour migration, see Paul Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group*, Revised ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p. 15.

might do well in Fiji, where there was a need for help on the sugar plantations. The Nippon Yoshisa company responded by sending 305 workers, but misrepresented the situation on the islands, where labour conditions were substandard to such a degree that a high death rate from beri-beri resulted and the survivors had to be sent back home to Japan.<sup>230</sup>

New Zealand, by contrast, had no need for Japanese workers, but the country did exert a certain fascination on those who made it that far. Historian Ken McNeil has studied the writings of a certain Shiga Shigetaka, who visited New Zealand and wrote of his experiences in 1887. Shigetaka thought of New Zealand as a 'Japan of the South,' and positioned the country as a benchmark of industrial and social development that challenged Japan with its rate of progress.<sup>231</sup> In subsequent decades Japan would assert its dominance, militarily speaking, and admiring sentiments of this sort gave way to more qualified and critical analyses, but the essential point in either case is that New Zealand was taken as a case study, not an immigrant destination. The islands north of New Zealand, on the other hand, managed to sustain small communities, though it is unclear what prompted the migrations. Perhaps news of the islands followed on the coattails of Japanese-owned trading companies, some of which, such as Nanyō Bōeki Kaisha, grew to considerable size and were able to supply goods and mail services for their migrant workers. According to this supply-chain scenario, Japanese-owned economic infrastructure most likely prefigured and anticipated communities of Japanese on various islands, although migrant communities could follow even to places where a company could not provide employment on a large

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230 David Campbell Purcell, "Japanese Expansion in the South Pacific, 1890-1935" (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1967), p. 10-11.

231 Ken McNeil, "New Zealand through a Japanese glass 1869-1944," *Japan Forum* 18, no. 1 (2006): p. 24-6.

scale, as was the case in Tonga where a Japanese firm competed with Burns, Philip & Company even while most Japanese residents were self-employed.<sup>232</sup>

Tonga prohibited Japanese and all other Asians from acquiring citizenship, a situation that called into question the status of Japanese civilian residents following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and Tonga's declaration of war twenty-four hours later.<sup>233</sup> Neither Fiji nor Tonga had adequate numbers of personnel to intern the Japanese on their own territory, and though New Zealand might have provided a guard unit along with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division that assisted in the defence of Fiji, New Zealand's army was already overstretched and the Japanese advance made pressing the question of how, if at all, an attack on the islands could be repulsed. The urgency of the situation was not born wholly out of concern for the wellbeing of the islanders, as the New Zealand government had declared in 1938 that Fiji and Tonga would comprise its outer defence perimeter, much in the manner that Japan would later place emphasis on the security provided through its own island possessions. What happened in Fiji and Tonga was regarded as a harbinger to what could happen in New Zealand and preparations took place accordingly, the first step being to remove certain segments of the population.<sup>234</sup> Residents of Japanese descent were immediately caught up in the arrangements, as were papālangi (white) and part-papālangi women and children who were compulsorily evacuated on the Union Steam Ship Company's *Matua*.<sup>235</sup> By January 1942, the Japanese who were formerly on Fiji and Tonga were all in New Zealand and divided between two locations: fourteen Japanese men from Tonga and a further

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232 Roger C. Thompson, "Britain, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand in Polynesia," in *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. H. R. Howe, Robert C. Kiste, and Brij V. Lal (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), p. 86.

233 Ron Crocombe, *Asia in the Pacific Islands: Replacing the West* (Suva: IPS Publications, 2007), p. 48.

234 Robert Lowry, *Fortress Fiji: Holding the Line in the Pacific War, 1939-45* (Sutton, N.S.W.: R. W. Lowry, 2006), p. 27.

235 Elizabeth Wood-Ellem, "Behind the Battle Lines: Tonga in World War II" (paper presented at the 7th Tongan History Conference, Canberra, 1997), p. 8.

thirty-one from Fiji were placed on Somes Island, a onetime quarantine facility in Wellington harbour that served as a holding area for German Nazis and nationals, Italian fascists and nationals, Japanese civilians, and others marked as suspicious characters, including Jews.<sup>236</sup> Women were held in less restrictive areas inland, but, unlike the men, the rule was to divide the nationalities, thereby ensuring that the Japanese women were not domiciled among groups of people whose culture or political creed reinforced or conflicted with their own. To this end, the Department of Internal Affairs rented a house at Pokeno for the eight Japanese women and nine children from Tonga, but the house proved depressing indeed, requiring, among other things, the removal of rank, mosquito-harboured growth, new toilet facilities, repapered interior walls, a repaired roof, and the demolition of a rat-infested shed. These defects were quickly remedied, however, and the Japanese women remained under the relatively benign administration of the police, a stark contrast to the Army supervision on Somes Island.

While improving the conditions of accommodation at Pokeno was a necessity in the short term, the long-term intention was to repatriate the Japanese in return for allied FEPOW's, an objective also pursued by the Americans in respect to some of their internees.<sup>237</sup> Negotiating with the Japanese government was a protracted process, but on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1942 the possibility of repatriating the Japanese was established and accordingly a questionnaire was issued to the male internees, the purpose of which was to determine their willingness to participate in an exchange of prisoners. All except three internees expressed their wish to participate and, on 25<sup>th</sup> June, the Police Department confirmed that

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236 The only book-length attempt to imagine what this social milieu must have entailed is Maurice Gee's novel *Live Bodies* (1998), though Gee makes no mention of the Japanese. The website [www.somesprisonersnz.net](http://www.somesprisonersnz.net) provides some basic factual information about the numbers involved.

237 On the matter of negotiated exchanges between internees in the United States and American FEPOW's in Japanese hands, see Bruce Elleman, *Japanese-American Civilian Prisoner Exchanges and Detention Camps, 1941-45* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

the women at Pokeno also wished to be exchanged, including Mrs. Banno, the Tongan wife of a Japanese. Her case was especially delicate, owing to the two illegitimate children she had born prior to meeting her husband, Gonkichi Banno. They were ineligible for repatriation and so she chose to place them in the Auckland Methodist Children's Home and to leave with her husband and their child. By July 1943 arrangements were well underway for the transfer of most of the Japanese to Australia on board the vessel *Oranje*, thence to be transported to the neutral port of Goa for a link-up with the allied FEPOW's held by Japan. The journey had several legs to it and there was some concern for the safety of the vessels involved, but these anxieties proved moot when, on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1943, a Liberator-type aircraft leaving Auckland and containing ten men (seven Japanese and three Thais), five women and ten children crashed on takeoff. Thirteen fatalities resulted, some from the crash itself and others possibly from drowning before rescuers could arrive. An investigation began and two weeks later, *The City of Canterbury* set sail from Australia with 834 Japanese on board, but none of the planned transferees from New Zealand. The survivors' repatriation was delayed until they and the urns of the deceased were taken to Australia, this time on the *Wahine*, to await a second exchange. A few special cases remained in New Zealand, though these were truly exceptional. Of these, two of the original internees from Tonga, Mitsuichi Saito and Juhei Nakao, wished to return there but had to wait until the end of the war and the assent of Tonga's Queen, Sālote Tupou III. A further two Japanese nationals resident in New Zealand at the outbreak of the war, Harold Kunioka and Kiyo Kameda, were interned for the duration and released at the end.<sup>238</sup>

With the exchanges complete, the story of New Zealand's role as an internment state during World War II was laid to rest for much of the rest of the century, and the near

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<sup>238</sup> Ken McNeil, "A Brief History of the Japanese in New Zealand," *Nyujirando Kenkyu* 3(1997): p. 69-72.

total absence of former internees resident in the nation has had ramifications for those wishing to disinter the events and place them in the public eye. Political activism on the part of former internees in the United States laid the groundwork for the cultural productions of today, but no such activism has taken place in New Zealand and those wishing to address the matter of internment must take heed of the masculine tradition of war service still current, as well as the comparatively better-known stories of FEPOW hardship. The sensitive nature of the Japanese material and its potential to unsettle valorising notions of wartime service puts writers and artists in a position somewhat akin to those early American publications that edged around the story of Japanese American internment without emphasising the American government's role in the matter. Moreover, the case of the 1995 production of *Shuriken* illustrates how veteran sentiment and the FEPOW experience may, through their presence in national memories of the war, foreclose creative ventures that seem to impinge upon their status. The practice of stonewalling thus entailed does not bode well for authors who seek to write of internment in New Zealand. However, given that New Zealand's internees were, from the outset, considered in terms of their potential for prisoner exchange, cultural productions addressing the events are compelled to view the internment experience not as a singular but, in all its injustice, part of a Pacific-wide series of imprisonments whose division into nationally-specific histories belies their interconnectedness. In Catran's writing, therefore, the manner in which different wartime narratives collide, converge, or cancel one another out becomes a matter of pressing significance alongside the details of the internment itself. Hers, in short, is as much a historiographic as an historical novel. American productions, by contrast, have tended to treat internment as an incomparable matter of national significance rather than an inseparable episode of Pacific-wide activity. The effect has been a remarkable succession of

works that explore and excoriate the deep-seated prejudice that led to the internment of persons of Japanese descent, of which Guterson's novel is among the most recent and established.<sup>239</sup> These efforts and the quality of the results have unquestionably placed American literature far ahead of New Zealand's still-nascent attempts at self-criticism where Japanese/minority internment is concerned, and, as we shall see, Guterson's language continuously arcs back toward the United States as the object of a search for the ideological origins of trauma.

### ***The Veteran as Saviour***

The circulation and circularity of prejudicial notions – that is, their dispersal among diverse peoples and the return of actors and agents to the places and peoples from which they first received their indoctrination – lie at the heart of Guterson's text. The internment of Japanese Americans stands as just one stage in this process, albeit a crucial one which is described in some detail. Intertwined with the internment narrative are the stories and longings of those who live on San Pedro Island, just off the coast of Washington State, a large number of whom fish for a living. One of these, Kabuo Miyamoto, is charged with the murder of fellow fisherman Carl Heine after the latter's body is found in a net. A trial ensues, covered by the local reporter, Ishmael Chambers, whose narrative persona is the most consistent touchstone throughout the novel and whose own history involves a childhood love affair with the accused's wife. Moments of courtroom cross-examination alternate with the memories of witnesses, drawing our attention to the inconsistencies between past events, their recollection in testimony, and their incorporation within a legal

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239 The novel has been taught in American high schools, though its sometimes graphic descriptions of battle and sexual awakening have occasioned controversy. For details of the controversy, see Jenny Brantley, "Clorox the Dishes and Hide the Books: A Defense of *Snow Falling on Cedars*," in *Censored Books II: Critical Viewpoints, 1985-2000*, ed. Nicholas J. Karolides (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002).



framework skewed toward the exploitation or rectification of anti-Japanese prejudice within audience and jury. Stereotypes and their capacity to foster (mis)assumptions comprise the currency of exchange in these moments.

As different social classes, ethnicities, ages, and dialects occupy the witness stand, the picture that emerges takes on an American resonance by its very plurality, yet the individuals are frequently at odds with one another, and the story they speak of, without speaking it necessarily, is one of suspicion and hostility charting their inevitable course toward persecution. Measured and contemplative, the narrative pace obscures this process to some degree, suggesting ample latitude for characters to consider each other's situations dispassionately, and yet this slow pace serves another purpose as well, allowing us to get a close look at the discriminatory practices that underpin people's motivations. To a large degree, the discriminations that take place on a day-by-day basis derive from standards of social inclusion and exclusion traceable to the wartime profiling of the Japanese which conflated their racial and national characteristics. The capacity of the San Pedro residents to think outside this conflation is so limited that the outcome of the trial appears to be a foregone conclusion. Even as he illustrates the ideological processes at work, Guterson's task is to forge a narrative path that steers clear of their dictates even while observing their power. As a running theme, the act of disencumbering oneself from the weight of the past hangs over every character in the novel.

Intertwined with this process is the struggle of the novel to overcome the canonical weight of its literary progenitor, *Moby Dick* (1851). In a moment of private musing, Ishmael Chambers recalls reading Melville's tome and judging his namesake tolerable, unlike the

figure of Ahab, whom he finds distasteful.<sup>240</sup> Not so much a structural model, *Moby Dick* comes to us mainly through Ishmael, whose capacity to discern (im)proper behaviours within set situations makes him something of a social caretaker, someone who stands apart from the trial's polarising cause and effects in contemplation rather than hostility. This much, at least, remains both possible and ideal, though the role and its built-in watchfulness are not as emotionally detached as they first appear, since Ishmael's condition as a veteran means that he harbours prejudices of his own. Indeed, war has twisted him into a composite that balances reason and friendship against anguished separateness, the principal characteristics of Melville's Ishmael and Ahab, respectively, and while the Ishmael of both texts maintains a position of power, as actual narrator or as a journalist, Guterson's Ishmael shares with Ahab the grim authority of the amputee. This latter feature is especially significant, providing both characters a reason to seek retribution against the agent of their disfigurement, and for both an opportunity arises and an ideal (profit from whaling, justice in the courts) becomes clouded by self-interest. On the matter of intertextuality, Anne Whitehead writes that "In returning to canonical texts, novelists evoke the Freudian notion of the repetition-compulsion, for their characters are subject to the 'plot' of another('s) story. Novelists can also revise canonical works, however, reading them against the grain and providing a new perspective on familiar texts."<sup>241</sup> For *Snow Falling on Cedars*, the depth of a national history of prejudice and a literary history of madness converge and reinforce one another, creating a striking quality of predestination that pushes the story forward, though the resolution of one ultimately proves enough to counteract the damage of the other.

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240 David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 31.

241 Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction*, p. 85.

This superstructure barely registers upon the novel's character-driven surface, which is so finely drawn that the mechanisms of ideology and intertextuality appear wholly natural, quietly ensconced behind areas allotted for the expression of each character. Art Moran's contemplations on the *Susan Marie*, and Horace Whaley's forensic flashbacks in the mortuary illustrate this aspect. These are moments when characters appear to step out from the text, not so much unfettered as aided by their human flaws, which they carry with them into their solitary meditations. The quality of Guterson's writing owes much to his uncompromising commitment to this soul-searching project, as well as a deft-handed fairness where weakness is concerned. A linear spectrum of virtue and vice is redundant alongside this framework – there is only the full measure of characters as they appear to themselves, and the half or near-empty estimates of them that others arrive at. Nor is this a one-way street particular to the double-consciousness of the minority subject, rather it describes the existential reality of all characters. Thus Ishmael is acutely aware of his place as an outsider in the discourse community of the fisherman, but also of the values his appearance signifies.<sup>242</sup> Sometimes, as in his case, characters are aware of what their appearances connote; at other times, as in Kabuo's, they misapprehend their effect on others. The origins of misreadings are various, partly ascribed to the cultural separatism of islanders, the pastoral rivalries of landowners, and the reactionary suspicions of German settlers. By far the greater cause, however, is the impact of the Pacific War on the public consciousness, which runs like a seismic rift through the text, splintering people in opposing directions to one another and to themselves. The silence of beleaguered identities emerges from within characters as a response to what the Pacific War has meant for them, as Horace realises when he notes how the veteran Carl Heine, formerly jocular, became virtually

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<sup>242</sup> Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, p. 39.

mute.<sup>243</sup> Elsewhere, Ishmael's mother responds to her son's request for guidance and advice by frankly admitting that his emotional numbness has placed him beyond comprehension; and when Hatsue takes the dock, her mind recollects how Kabuo's war service rendered him a near stranger. The novel is replete with such cases, and in each the Pacific War stands not so much alongside characters as between them, severing rather than binding social connections.

It is worth taking a look at how this works between Ishmael and Hatsue, for the realisation of Ishmael's role as a social caretaker depends upon overcoming the psychic damage he undergoes as a result of his childhood love affair and its demise. The Pacific War impacts upon both characters, rending them apart from each other so that communication becomes limited to carefully inflected silences in which reproach and disdain figure strongly as meanings. Yet the Pacific War serves to break an already strained relationship, under pressure from the silencing effect of adults, though it would be unfair to say that all silences are indicative of emotional damage, a lesson Ishmael learns when, as a child, he kisses Hatsue and realises that her silence is typical of her and not tied to the event itself.<sup>244</sup> As it transpires, Hatsue's silence most likely affirms a requited longing, yet it also looks back upon her schooling in diffidence, a practice that is bound to her position as an ethnic minority and a woman:

Mrs. Shigemura was open and forthright with Hatsue about matters of a sexual nature. With all the seriousness of a fortune-teller she predicted that white men would desire Hatsue and seek to destroy her virginity. [...] Stay away from white men,

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

said Mrs. Shigemura, and marry a boy of your own kind whose heart is strong and good.<sup>245</sup>

Hatsue's education in equanimity contains no ideological component until this point and need not be a vessel for such sentiments, as Hatsue herself realises upon discovering that her outward composure provides a perfect façade for her inner imaginings, which are effectively directed toward the forbidden fruit Mrs. Shigemura holds out. Thus, while a planned exfoliation of Hatsue's mind is the aim, incubation is the result. Yet it remains a doubtful, halting, imperfect incubation riven with guilt at the contravention of familial expectations, and it entices Ishmael toward a point where Hatsue presents a promise of romantic fulfilment she eventually reneges on, prompting, in him, an embittered turn toward anti-Japanese sentiments. Mrs. Shigemura's teachings are the starting point for this process and her influence is indelible, internalised by Hatsue and re-emergent as suspicion toward Ishmael's integrationist ideas. The two children do not, of course, comprehend their position in these terms, and only glimpse their differences obliquely through discussions that reveal their commitment to holistic and divisible worldviews, a difference that contains obvious repercussions for their own relationship:

"Oceans don't mix," said Hatsue. "They're different temperatures. They have different amounts of salt."

"They mix underneath," said Ishmael. "It's all really just one ocean."

[...]

"The main thing is, water is water. Names on a map don't mean anything. Do you think if you were out there in a boat and you came to another ocean you'd see a sign or something? It-"

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

“The color would change, I’ve heard that,” said Hatsue. “The Atlantic Ocean is brown, sort of, and the Indian Ocean is blue.”<sup>246</sup>

Hatsue’s insistence on partition doubles as a statement of racial fixity and describes the limits of her own future, which involve a prophylactic demarcation drawn across her relationship with Ishmael after her mother learns of it. The language of loyalty to one’s descent, whether racial or cultural or both, and the disjuncture that arises in harmonising these codes with consensual practices in everyday life – between prescribed and proscribed behaviours according to *issei*, on the one hand, and the pull toward practices that follow individual choice, on the other – show Hatsue’s dilemma in terms characteristic to the ethnic subject.<sup>247</sup> In placing family dictates ahead of personal choice, Hatsue does not fail to realise an American ideal, for she takes this decision in an internment camp, the political solution to the selfsame issues writ large upon a national scale – that is, whether to place emphasis upon a conflation of white cultural and racial identity to the exclusion of specific ethnic groups, or whether to recognise in the latter the realisation of an ideal that makes American identity a matter of choice. In fact, the doctrine of racial exclusion, whether enforced by the government, where Hatsue is concerned, or by her family upon Ishmael, is so similar in both cases that the text reflects each side back upon the other.

The mutual reflexivity built into such moments is most obvious in the language Hatsue’s mother, Fujiko, uses to rein in her daughter’s errant impulses: “You must live in this world, of course you must, and this world is the world of the *hakujin* – you must learn to live in it, you must go to school. But don’t allow living *among* the *hakujin* to become living

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>247</sup> Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 6.

*intertwined* with them. Your soul will decay.”<sup>248</sup> Since these words echo the practices of the state, Fujiko speaks with considerable authority. The language of prejudice has gone full circle by this point, entering the racialised subject and emerging, reworked, as an equal and opposite reaction. Indeed, though the story makes clear that the *issei* foster their own suspicions about white sexual predators, there are, in Fujiko’s history of immigration, the moments in which she first experiences the “humiliating disdain” of whites, suggesting that mainstream American society may, after all, be the origin of the prejudice that shuttles across generations and from minority subject to veteran.<sup>249</sup> By the time of internment, Fujiko and the state act almost in concert, not only echoing one another’s language but speaking in each other’s stead. Thus the FBI agents who check over Imadas’ house casually play at parenting, and Fujiko’s prediction that the war will force her children to become more Japanese could well stand in for government sentiment.<sup>250</sup> In the face of the harmonisation of parental and internment discourse, Hatsue’s resistance crumbles. Her only refuge is in silence, the practice of which is bound to her training as a Japanese woman. Fujiko thereby traps her daughter in a quandary: if Hatsue speaks out, she reveals an intemperance anathema to state and family; if she remains silent, she proves her Japanese-ness and must behave as a Japanese according to her mother’s terms or live a life of contradictions. The silence that follows has multiple agents, being the product of her ethnic identity, as seen by the state, and Hatsue’s status as a female subject, as dictated by her mother. In common with other ethnic women, the sources of Hatsue’s silence may share

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248 Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, p. 202.

249 Ibid., p. 85.

250 Ibid., p. 199.

similar or even identical ideological components, and yet the doubling of their influence results in a compound effect.<sup>251</sup>

The silencing of the internee by multiple interpenetrating agents explains her effect upon Ishmael, whom Hatsue effectively silences in turn when he tries to speak with her in the courthouse.<sup>252</sup> As noted, the veteran subjects are distinct in their deracinated behaviours, to the extent that they alienate those nearest to them by their unreachable malaise, so for Ishmael to move beyond his nominally disarticulated selfhood requires significant effort along with a prospect of betterment in psychological or emotional terms. The prospect of such relief is tied to Hatsue's position as his former lover, but also her rejection of him while interned, and, since love and trauma are each defined primarily by the need to make a compromised subject whole, his return to her is unsurprising. Yet this effort cannot succeed. Ishmael is associated with a consensual, pre-internment lifestyle in which social possibilities, unchallenged by relocation, and romantic intrigue, undiscovered by Fujiko, are attainable. There is also the matter of the trial itself, an inherently public affair that recalls the internment, which, as Emily Roxworthy notes, objectified Japanese Americans within the public gaze at the same time it displaced them:

By framing the evacuation and internment as spectacles, the United States positioned the American public as passive spectators to the unconstitutional treatment of their ethnic Japanese neighbors and, simultaneously, cast the public as heroic 'patriots' opposite Japanese Americans, who were cast in one of two thankless roles: expressionless automata or melodramatic villains.<sup>253</sup>

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251 Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*, p. 4-5.

252 Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, p. 8.

253 Emily Roxworthy, *The Spectacle of Japanese American Trauma: Racial Performativity and World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), p. 4.



Although Ishmael is not involved in the trial's proceedings, just being a spectator is enough to make problematic his overtures to Hatsue and, in fact, his own prejudices have already proven his capacity to conflate the Japanese military and former internees.<sup>254</sup> Hatsue's rejection of Ishmael is therefore an act of throwing prejudice back at the veteran, recycling it in the face of the evident reprisals taking place against her husband in the courtroom.

The outright disestablishment of their relationship's validity leaves Ishmael no reason to hope for personal gain in the outcome of the trial, and so indifference would seem the most probable course to follow. Who Ishmael is, not what he can obtain, becomes the only issue at stake in determining the likelihood of actions on Kabuo's behalf. As the trial nears its close, the two attorneys take up positions encouraging reactionism (Alvin Hooks' message) or contemplation (Nels Gudmundsson's message) and Ishmael's torn identity gravitates to each in turn. The surnames of these two figures reveal their textual and ideological positions, for Alvin seeks to conjoin, to tempt, to affix his interpretation of Kabuo's actions to memories of war and propaganda images of the Japanese. Nels' name, on the other hand, recalls lineage, wisdom, and fatherly guidance to suggest a paternalistic expectation of upright behaviour. These siren calls vie within Ishmael, who voices the tortured condition of the whole community when he mourns time's inability to heal wounds: "But ten years was not really such a long time at all, and how was he to leave his passion behind when it went on living its own independent life, as tangible as the phantom limb he'd refused for so long to have denervated?"<sup>255</sup> The aggrieved authority of the amputee alongside the trial's headlong rush toward resolution suggest the spectre of an Ahab-esque imperative that must triumph over Ishmael's conscience.

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<sup>254</sup> Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, p. 250-51.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

To counteract the array of prejudicial sentiments in the San Pedro community, and also the stricken sense of self-mortification that has made him a half-Ishmael, half-Ahab, Ishmael must return to his role as the eye through which the novel sees itself. Accomplishing this involves looking past social veneers, including his own, and the text sets him up for such an endeavour when, as a boy, he shows Hester a world of marine life through a glass-bottomed box.<sup>256</sup> The moment signals that Ishmael holds a special capacity to determine what takes place at sea, his childhood forays serving to foreshadow an adult contribution to this same process, one that becomes possible on an altogether different scale when he visits a lighthouse and discovers records pertinent to the trial. Ishmael's stranded isolationism in adulthood marks him as an oddball to others, but his malaise belies a commitment to comprehending how the individual is placed or displaced in society. Narratively, the text marks this commitment by associating Ishmael with ocular devices: the glass-bottomed box, his box camera, the lighthouse, and the discovery of Carl Heine's lantern. As a youth and an adult he 'sees through' areas others cannot, and in the lighthouse Ishmael discovers the ingredients that will allow him to return to this role and move beyond his individual grievances in a single stroke, thereby completing a narrative circle of character development and ending the succession of persecutions in the community as well.

In the event, having overthrown his compunctions and the prosecution of Kabuo as well, the spectre of Ahab and his drive toward social destruction recedes both from Ishmael and from the novel, proving the possibility of an alternative future for both. Only the matter of prejudice within the wider San Pedro community remains, and while the closure of the case against Kabuo appears to draw a line under this as well, we need to look further

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

to examine whether this is actually so. To be sure, the sense of resolution encompasses the wider community as well as Ishmael, but this may have less to do with the trial than the text's use of a scapegoat on which to project the worst aspects of social prejudice. On this subject, the German scholar Paul Heike observes that the depiction of German Americans and, more especially, the figure of Carl Heine's mother, enacts a textual displacement of prejudice from white American society as a whole onto the ethnic German community, thereby absolving most (white) American readers of the need to take Guterson's writing as pertinent social criticism.<sup>257</sup> As compelling as Heike's argument is, it supplies only half the answer to the means by which social prejudice apparently dissipates at the end. If the novel emphasises the deep-seated antipathies of German Americans, it exonerates Ishmael of the same features and enables him to recover the role of Melville's Ishmael when he almost closes the novel as its narrator, seated in front of his typewriter, musing and possibly writing the final thoughts that serve as epilogue. The final account of what happened to Carl Heine comes to us through him, and we gradually understand how Carl's fastidiousness, that maternal characteristic which deprived the Miyamotos of their land, deprived him of his life.<sup>258</sup> As a form of poetic justice that recalls Kabuo's grievance against his mother, then, Carl's death balances the books, and yet it comes to us purely in this allusive form and thus does not exist outside Ishmael's subjectivity. We are therefore left speculating on why Ishmael renders events as he does.

In this section, I have attempted to illustrate how prejudice circulates among individuals in the novel and how silence can take many forms, including those that

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<sup>257</sup> Paul Heike, "Old, New and 'Neo' Immigrant Fictions in American Literature: The Immigrant Presence in David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* and T. C. Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain*," *Amerikastudien* 46, no. 2 (2001): p. 257.

<sup>258</sup> Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, p. 458.

apparently implicate Japanese immigrants and minorities in the same cyclical process. The figure of the veteran stands as the most significant party to this process, at various times a source of or solution to the prejudices surrounding him. To this figure Guterson adds a compulsive drive toward self- and communal ruin that comes from *Moby Dick* functioning as ur-text. When Ishmael halts the progression of prejudice in its judicial manifestation and throws off the mantle of intertextual predeterminism, then, he achieves a measure of peace for himself that carries over into his final role as quasi-narrator. In short, the satisfying neatness of these developments for Ishmael stands in for a resolution for the whole San Pedro community. We may wonder what the reaction of other people is to Kabuo's acquittal, and their opinion of Ishmael's editorial, but the novel does not take us that far. Instead, it rests easy in Ishmael's grasp, tidied up and rounded off in a manner that is geographically, morally, and psychologically self-contained and self-defined.

### ***The Veteran as Protestor***

Literary fictions that seek to disclose the Japanese American or Canadian internment experience have sometimes redoubled their commission by simultaneously probing and filling the vacancies in mainstream history writing and political discourse. The ways in which authors narrate internment, that is, originate not solely in the intrinsic worthiness of the story, but also from an extrinsic assessment of the ways in which it has been (mis)dealt with in past productions. As Gurleen Grewal puts it in her reading of *Obasan* (1981) and *Beloved* (1987), "When [conventional historiography] is the dominant group's version of an oppressed group's experience, it becomes imperative that the elisions, the repressions, and

the silences be explored.”<sup>259</sup> If we approach Wendy Catran’s *The Swap* with the same set of assumptions, however, we must take into account the absoluteness of the silence surrounding the story of internment in New Zealand, which amounts to a total void. Unlike Joy Kogawa, who wrote *Obasan* in the form of historiographic metafiction, Catran cannot place her writing in conversation with the published writings of government and the academy, as there have been none that have even touched on the Fiji / Tongan-New Zealand internment story. Naturally, one might retort, this only makes the project all the more worthwhile. True enough, but, to be fair, in New Zealand’s case the ignorance of the establishment is almost definitely not wilful, having more to do with the suddenness with which the internees came to New Zealand and the suddenness of their departure. In the absence of surviving internees and their descendants living in New Zealand, it would be partly true to say that the story was forgotten (by the police, the Army, and the administrators), but more true to say that it was never really known in the first place (by the general population). These matters are crucial to our reading of Catran, for they place her in the extraordinary position of being the first to publish on internment, even as they close off certain thematic areas that we have come to associate with internment in the North Americas. In particular, debates over immigration and exclusion acts, or assimilation and multiculturalism, are extraneous and their absence forces us to consider how a novel can challenge concepts of nation and society when the ethnic experience was so temporally transitory and geographically transitional. This problem appears to have preoccupied Catran also, her solution being a family-centred story in which individual histories converge and jostle for attention in formations wholly absent in other families, but conceivable in

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259 Gurleen Grewal, "Memory and the Matrix of History: The Poetics of Loss and Recovery in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," in *Memory and Cultural Politics: New Approaches to American Ethnic Literatures*, ed. Amritjit Singh, Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr., and Robert E. Hogan (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), p. 141.

every one. In other words, Catran writes her story into the lives of characters who belong to a 'generic' Kiwi family. To reinforce the impression of the commonplace, Catran leaves the precise details of time and location to the imagination, beginning her chapters with headings like 'Somewhere in the Pacific, Wartime' or 'The Fifties, New Zealand.' A few characters are also left nameless, being referred to only as 'Uncle,' 'Mum,' and 'Dad.' Deliberate vagueness of this sort is a feature common to many young adult novels, the effect being to bring events into high relief, almost as if they were happening to the people next door.

But there is another purpose here, besides imagined proximity, or more properly in league with it, for by prompting us to identify with a 'generic' family Catran forces us to recognise traits and thinking patterns that may be our own, and not always the most edifying sort either. Committees for redress, community workshops, and conferences on political activism may not feature in her story, but we do get a hard look at dining room quarrels, kitchen sink churlishness, and backyard moodiness. Within these moments, the foundations of the family are revealed as intimately dependent upon the assumptions of the past, so that realignments in the latter disturb the structure of the former. Individual family members clash with one another, that is, because they represent vested historical interests, meaning that the past is not approached as an intellectual abstraction but carried within as an intensely personal, visceral reality that challenges the levelling, homogenised demands of family. What sets these tensions in motion is the departure of the parents' only son, Alan, to the Korean War. We do not learn what Alan experiences in this conflict, as his military service is viewed from the point of view of his younger sister, Maree, who judges it only in terms of 'Alan before' and 'Alan after,' a comparison that casts the returned version unfavourably. Politically cynical and emotionally wasted, Alan himself implicitly agrees with

the judgement, primarily because he has come to take nationalism and militarism as a chance for states to extract a blood sacrifice of every passing generation.<sup>260</sup> Such sentiments put him at odds with the patriotism of 'Dad' and 'Uncle,' who are both veterans of World War II and proud of his service.<sup>261</sup> But Alan's attempt to break with the culture of the military answers the needs of his new wife, Keiko, whom he has met in Tokyo while defending her from the badinage of American GI's.<sup>262</sup> Keiko, in turn, carries with her the story of New Zealand internment, not her own but that of her adopted brother who survived the aeroplane crash before being repatriated, and it is really her presence, more than any subsequent events, that disturbs 'Uncle' and 'Dad' and, by extension, the emotional balance of the family. With these two sides occupying distinctive political and historical subjectivities, events do not have to unfold in order for the story to achieve momentum, instead the characters look askance at one another while the only untouched innocent, Maree, tries to pick up the pieces of shattered family life.

In what follows, I propose that the lateness of the first New Zealand publication on internment, arriving some sixty years after the evacuees departed, as well as the relative uniqueness of the facts of internment in comparison with North American equivalents, has allowed the author to construct a story that pays heed to the ways in which an internment

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260 Though anti-war sentiments crested during the Vietnam War protests, a subdued sense of disquiet was discernable during the Korean War as well. On this matter, one observer notes that "In the fifth form one boy dismissed the Army speaker who, he said, 'treated war as a game.' We mocked him and, when he persisted, ostracised him. Thirteen years later when I was teaching in a secondary school, a Navy officer fresh from the war in Korea addressed the assembly. A group of sixth formers protested saying, 'This is obscene – he's pretending war is a game.' This time many of the staff and senior boys agreed." See Jack Shallcross, "Tidal Changes," in *One of the Boys? Changing Views of Masculinity in New Zealand*, ed. Michael King (Auckland: Heinemann Publishers, 1988), p. 23-4.

261 Michael King recalls the social pressures to participate in or otherwise venerate military service as entrenched. See Michael King, *Being Pakeha Now: Reflections and Recollections of a White Native* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 24-6.

262 Wendy Catran, *The Swap* (South Melbourne, Victoria: Lothian Books, 2004), p. 12. This theme of soldiers defending civilian women from unwelcome American advances appears elsewhere in New Zealand literature. A noteworthy example features in M. K. Joseph's *A Soldier's Tale* (1976) and its film version (1988).

narrative might interact with or come up against more 'established' bodies of knowledge. Such awareness, in particular of the ways in which the internment and the FEPOW narrative counterbalance one another (or fail to), raises a set of questions that internment novels elsewhere seldom confront: can public interest sustain equal regard for the FEPOW and the internment experiences, or are political, social, and cultural movements inherently predisposed toward one at the expense of the other? If they are not so predisposed, what type of 'scale' or 'measuring mechanism' ensures that the balance of discursive power does not incline in prejudicial directions? If they are so predisposed, does the delivery of one signal the silencing of 'the other'? Is our moral geography tied to the spatial geography of the Pacific region, so that we assign historical precedence to the memory of camps in one area about which we know a fair amount, but not to another about which we know rather less? Can there only ever be one camp, one victim, one story? Marching under the banner of 'correctives' and 'interventions,' liberal writers and scholars tend to satisfy themselves with productions that do indeed focus on one regional phenomenon although, as in the case of John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957), they readily acknowledge that multiple forms of victimhood may arise from that original moment. Generally speaking, the response of groups and individuals who recall camp life (and camp deaths) at similar times but in different regions does not preoccupy liberal scholars and writers in the first instance. On the other hand, when one encounters a writer who adopts a 'multimodal' approach in the way that Catran does, one sees that although there are worthwhile questions to ask, the asking is a great deal easier than the answering. To read Catran is, in fact, to witness the birth of a well-researched impasse that takes the story of internment and inserts it into a field of contested knowledge in which it cannot function as more than an inert fixture. We have seen this trend elsewhere. In his novel, Jim Lehrer had likewise attempted to act as



umpire in a match of 'duelling victimhoods' (the notion is again applicable here) and he too foundered at the end – for what 'end' can there be, when victimhood belongs equally to each side, or in any event appears to? One does not wish to be too hard on either of these writers, who are ultimately brought up short by their relative thinking and who, once they have thrashed out the reasons why others think in more absolute terms, come to the realisation that they have created or 'encountered' a Gordian Knot whose structure resists disentanglement. The value of their writing lies in describing the Knot rather than undoing it, as well as ascribing moral and emotional imperatives to the Knot's different historical strands.

So that we get the point, Catran interweaves her strands in a structure of chapters that alternates between the 1940's narrative of Japanese internment and the Korean War veteran's hopes for a future with his Japanese war bride in mid-1950's New Zealand. In the former case, the story focuses a good deal upon those who stayed at Pokeno, perhaps because the situation of the Japanese men on Somes Island, thrown together with other nationalities and creeds, necessarily involved questions and situations beyond the novel's capacity to address. Catran, in any case, prefers to approach internment from the point of view of those who are least equipped to endure it: the children who require schooling, the infants who are too young to comprehend, the women who are pregnant, and the wives who miss their husbands. Through these characters, we come to understand the debilitating effect of forced separations as well as the irony built into a process that breaks up homes and then tucks women and children tidily away in a country house. Perhaps another, more obvious reason for focusing on Pokeno rather than Somes is that the domestic setting facilitates comparisons with Keiko's travails as Alan's wife in the 1950's. Keiko's arrival into the Kiwi household heralds the possibility of binding ethnic-national

groups together and bridging the divisions of the past, yet her presence elicits only an exclusionary silence, and quickly reveals the limits of tolerance within the family and in 'Uncle' and 'Mum' especially.<sup>263</sup> The notion of family, as the latter conceive it, contains ideals and expectations that cannot be contravened. In the case of women, gender roles dictate that they remain at home and not compete against men in the workplace.<sup>264</sup> In the case of veterans, the stress and temptations associated with overseas service typically grants them a degree of license, but in return for 'licentious' freedoms abroad and sexism in the workplace at home, they are enjoined to avoid marrying foreign women. Keiko does not seek to work, yet she signifies a brake in the expectations associated with veterans and so she shuts herself away, and is in turn ostracised by a wall of silence. Here it is interesting to compare Keiko's situation with a moment in which the Pokeno women try to speak with their husbands during a visit to Somes Island:

"English," barked the guard.

"She's only –" began Lani.

"English!" said the guard, and scowled at them.

[...]

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263 The deleterious effects of exacting mothers upon the New Zealand family is a running theme throughout New Zealand literature, and the disappointment of Alan's mother upon learning of his spousal choice worsens the difficulties associated with recovery from war trauma. For a study of the confluence of Puritanism and the maternal within New Zealand literature, see Alistair Fox, *The Ship of Dreams: Masculinity in Contemporary New Zealand Fiction* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2008).

264 During the Second World War, the 'ideal' role for women, tied to domestic work, had to be relaxed somewhat in order to fill job vacancies left by soldiers who went overseas. When the latter returned, the women were convinced to give up their jobs because they shared – or were convinced that they shared – the 'ideal' of domestic family life. See Deborah Montgomerie, "Sweethearts, Soldiers, Happy Families: Gender and the Second World War," in *The Gendered Kiwi*, ed. Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), p. 165-66.

And then there was silence. Sakura wanted to scream. This was her father, whom she hadn't seen for so long. There was so much she wanted to say, tell him, ask him.

The words wanted to pour out of her, in Tongan, in Japanese.<sup>265</sup>

Since Keiko is the only possible narrator of these events, the silencing of Japanese families throws her own condition into a new light. As the bearer of the story, her quiet demeanour may have less to do with an ability to accept the ostracism of Alan's family, and more to do with an internalised constraint, the effect of the guards being to enforce silence in testifiers as well as visitors. Seen this way, the internment camp bears some similarity to the discursive violence committed at Nazi concentration camps, in which a dehumanising vocabulary was deployed to render victims invisible within language as well as in fact, thus 'covering over' the memories of survivors with the sense that, having spoken the language of their persecutors, they had been made to replicate the ideology that put them there in the first place, resulting in an indelible mark upon the mind that calls the possibility of objective witnessing into question.<sup>266</sup> The silencing of the Japanese reverberates through the text, so that we can never be certain whether it is indeed Keiko who narrates – that is, whether she has recovered a capacity to speak. What becomes clear is that the constraints placed upon Keiko by Alan's family have the same purpose of enforced separation as that experienced on Somo Island. They are intended to break her marriage with Alan and speed the ejection of her from the family, the home, and the country.

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<sup>265</sup> Catran, *The Swap*, p. 139.

<sup>266</sup> I have in mind here the enforced practice of referring to corpses as 'figures' in concentration camps. Primo Levi also recalls how some Jews took up quasi-official positions, designated 'prominents,' who had a measure of authority over their fellow captives and, unable to express the anguish of their condition toward their guards, became especially vindictive toward the people they were meant to minister. See Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Touchstone, [1958] 1996), p. 90-1.

The demands placed upon Alan to reconsider his marriage implicitly fall back on the exclusionary paradigms that reached their zenith during internment, and their effect within the family is to push Alan toward to the point of breakdown, at which point Maree confronts 'Uncle' and questions his resistance to Keiko. More than anyone else, 'Uncle' has objected to Keiko and his motivations remain concealed until the novel's end, at which point he provides Maree with a collection of material so that she can draw her own conclusions:

She picked up Uncle's papers again. Read 'Changi' – then turned to the photos. She gasped. Men, skeleton-thin, skulls in which sunken eyes glittered.

They lay on the ground in rows, as if waiting to be buried, but it seemed to be their sleeping quarters. Then another photo. One man, grinning, startled, as if surprised he was still alive to face a camera. It had a caption under it, in Uncle's handwriting – My dear friend Jim; survived for seven months after the war. Maree stared in horror at the emaciated face, she couldn't remember seeing a Jim. No doubt her family, Uncle, had kept her and Alan away from him.<sup>267</sup>

The discovery of a second history of captivity within the family disturbs the moral equilibrium of the novel, which had taken us toward the pronouncement of deep-seated prejudice within New Zealand society, and although Maree's revelation does not counteract this conclusion, it re-frames the problem to allow that taking a high moral tone toward FEPOW's may be tantamount to another act of silencing. At around this time too, Maree learns from Keiko the story of the Japanese in New Zealand – that which we, as readers, have already received, without knowing its source. But while Keiko's testimony provides a certain narrative neatness, it does not result in moral settlement. Her story and 'Uncle's' are intertwined strands, since the repatriation of the Japanese was arranged as a 'swap' for

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<sup>267</sup> Catran, *The Swap*, p. 188.

FEPOW's, but that does not mean that she and 'Uncle' can 'swap' moral guilt and / or victimhood, for these conditions are not tradable articles. The result, instead, is impasse in the face of two stories, each of which seeks to address and redress an attention deficit in a way that defies contravention, such is the authority with which they hold forth. On the matter of the politicised nature of testimony, trauma theorist Kalí Tal writes that "Bearing witness is an aggressive act. It is born out of a refusal to bow to outside pressure to revise or to repress experience, a decision to embrace conflict rather than conformity, to endure a lifetime of anger and pain rather than to submit to the seductive pull of revision and repression. Its goal is change."<sup>268</sup> As Tal's study makes clear, testimonials contain a degree of political intention outside their deployment as moral, psychological, or legal discourses and Catran's narrative captures the deadlocked quandary that results from manifold attempts to dismantle 'the other's' position.

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Guterson and Catran are both concerned with creating stories that reflect upon the experiences of Japanese/minorities in the United States and New Zealand during the Pacific War, but they also recognise the veteran's capacity to complicate this process. At the start of this chapter, I suggested that the objections raised by returned servicemen to the production of Vincent O'Sullivan's *Shuriken* illustrate the discursive interconnectedness of stories appertaining to Japanese victimhood and allied victimhood. Guterson and Catran take this fraught socio-political contestation and make it a constituent feature of their writing, encouraging us to step back from our all-too-probable partisanship and observe the historical position of the veteran without necessarily acceding to him. The reasons for 'Uncle's' objections to Keiko are distasteful but understandable – forgivable, even, when

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<sup>268</sup> Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 7.

one acknowledges his experience as a FEPOW – and we may accept their validity even as we receive Keiko’s testimony to internment. For his part, Ishmael proves that the veteran may partially overcome the ideologies that he uses to vilify Japanese/Americans, and may even come round to a more accepting point of view than the larger community around him. Having said that, Guterson and Catran also represent different stages in the development of the internment narrative within their respective national cultures, and so one ought not to assume that these publications are coeval in a qualitative or contextual sense. We need to remember, most of all, that nothing had been published about internment in New Zealand prior to Catran’s novel. Thus it is not surprising that Catran treads carefully around the topic, knowing that it represents new information to her readers, and ‘closeting’ the story as a topic shared between two people, Maree and Keiko. In *Snow Falling on Cedars*, by contrast, the story of internment (and the prejudices surrounding it) emerges squarely in the public arena of a law court with all due confidence, for his is a maturity of both style and subject matter. Finally, let us recall that literary fictions dealing with internment in the United States have only ever framed the phenomenon in terms of national significance, in large part because of the communities of surviving ex-internees and their descendants who remain fiercely vigilant regarding the story’s place and function, politically, socially, culturally, and so on. In New Zealand, on the other hand, the story must necessarily fit into a wider network of interacting captivities. As a result, Catran’s sympathies are too various, her ending too deliberately irresolute, to make this a novel purely concerned with civil liberties in a single national context, though it is that.<sup>269</sup> What remains are a set of problems and issues, filtered through the interiority of veteran and minority and caught by a child for

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<sup>269</sup> The difficulties Catran faced have led at least one reviewer to criticise the novel’s ending as being ‘rather rushed,’ but though the judgement may have some validity one must take into account the encumbrances that authors encounter when adopting a ‘multimodal’ approach. See Fran Knight, “The Swap,” *Magpies* 19, no. 4 (2004).

future consideration. As is so often the case with New Zealand literature, the awkwardness and hesitancy consequent to an underdeveloped canon contrast markedly with the richness and élan of other national literatures, but the promise of a new knowledge horizon likewise brings to light neglected areas and approaches in ways that may make us reconsider notions of literary 'development.'

## Chapter 5

### Avoiding the Subject

NASO recognises that a nuclear conflagration is conceivable and that such could originate within the Northern Hemisphere. This being the case, it regards New Zealand as being likely to escape the most severe consequences of both a nuclear holocaust and the aftermath of a nuclear winter. It follows that this country could, therefore, be one of the last refuges of civilisation left in the world capable of accepting responsibility for the administration of enlightened global reconstruction.

From the *Draft Principles of Assembly, Nuclear Aftermath Strategy Organisation*,

Taupo, New Zealand, 1985.

Dateline: 12.00 a.m., Japan Standard Time, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945. Speaking to his subjects for the first time, the Emperor Hirohito announces the decision to accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration and surrender unconditionally. Nine days previously, the first atomic bomb to be used in war had levelled Hiroshima in a matter of seconds. This the Emperor describes as both 'new' and 'cruel.' Unmentioned in the Rescript, certain other factors have also had a role in pushing the Japanese government to surrender, especially the devastation wrought by previous firebombing raids over Japanese cities and the Soviet entry into the war on the 9<sup>th</sup>. But in the Anglophone world, the atomic blasts served to punctuate the moment as nothing else could and declamatory news headlines banished extraneous material to the margins. Since then, historians and other researchers have felt a certain temptation, structurally speaking, to reinstate the episode as a convenient way to draw their studies of World War II to a close, almost to say that a scholarly narrative which mirrors the sequence of military actions borrows an authority unknown elsewhere. The



refuge is false, of course, since people do not recall wars in strictly linear terms and, in any case, there is never a single linear strain to invoke as a universal.<sup>270</sup> We might grant that the atomic bombings served as a general reference point of some sort to the allies, if not necessarily and always an 'end' as such, but to do so is to become bogged down in the polemic of whether the bombings were militarily, politically, or scientifically defensible. Hiroshima was many things to many people, as everyone admits, but the dominant Anglophone perspective insists upon linking the destruction of a city to the termination of the war.<sup>271</sup> Anything else is not so much narrative as counter-narrative, meaning that what the latter posits, no matter how convincing or descriptive, can never be as compelling as its capacity to implicitly refute, or at least diverge from, that 'original' narrative of 'ending.'

The compulsion that public writers and intellectuals feel to draw battle lines when confronting the topic is itself evidence of just how divisive questions of 'necessity' have become. Even the best are tempted to adopt a shrill tone, stubbornly unhearing or repetitively appealing, a trend that is by no means limited to Americans. Japanese Canadian author Joy Kogawa, for example, has tasked her fellow citizens to remember their country's role in the creation of the atom bomb and to alchemise this self-analysis into a more active stance against the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>272</sup> Grandiloquently confrontational, Kogawa sees no merit in ducking responsibility:

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270 Here I am in agreement with Kai Erikson, who distinguishes between the clear temporal demarcations within historical studies and the ways in which traumatic events are recalled by people in a given society. As Erikson puts it in respect to beginnings rather than endings, "The historian who wants to know where a story starts, like the therapist who needs to identify a precipitating cause in order to deal with the injury it does, will naturally be interested in beginnings. But those are no more than details to everyone else (and not even very important ones at that), because it is how people react to them rather than what they are that give events whatever traumatic quality they may be said to have." See Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 184.

271 This chapter follows the common scholarly practice of taking Hiroshima as shorthand for both explosions, or as the first and inaugural explosion. Where writers and others refer instead to Nagasaki this will be made clear in the text.

272 As with Canada so with New Zealand, and more so still in the matter of the gap between national image (as peaceful, non-nuclear powers) and historical record (as co-participants in the research that led to the bomb's development). We shall see shortly how New Zealand fiction writers have hardly begun the

We need to acknowledge the appetite for war, the fears that feed it, the hunger for vengeance, the blood lust. It is fresh blood that the dogs of war always demand. And so I believe we need to be graphic in our remembering, visceral in our imagining. We need to understand how the past is demonstrably present, so that the salivating beasts with their mad thirst may drink and feel and realize the close, close connection between ourselves and the ones we devour. We need to taste the blood and know it to be our own.<sup>273</sup>

Kogawa's sanguinary baroque is far removed from the terse demurral of Paul Fussell, who likewise makes no bones about his position: "The degree to which Americans register shock and extraordinary shame about the Hiroshima bomb correlates closely with lack of information about the Pacific War."<sup>274</sup> Both of these writers occupy a classic position on either side of a debate that has no foreseeable end in sight. They do not converge, nor are they ever likely to diminish on exposure to an opponent's viewpoint, though each is clearly reliant on the other as stimulus, even when they are not personally acquainted. A certain equilibrium exists, fuelled by tension, which does not disguise the fact that the prevailing public view throughout the United States tends to look askance at revisionist mandates.

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task of delving into their country's role in the production of the bomb, which began initially with scientific participation in the British-run Montreal Project and led also to work at Berkeley, California, where two scientists assisted in separating U235 from natural uranium. See Owen Wilkes, "New Zealand and the Atom Bomb," in *Kia Kaha: New Zealand in the Second World War*, ed. John Crawford (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000).

273 Joy Kogawa, "Three Deities," in *Literary Environments: Canada and the Old World*, ed. Britta Olinder, *Canadian Studies* No. 5 (Brussels, Belgium: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 16.

274 Paul Fussell, "Thank God for the Atom Bomb," in *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays*, ed. Paul Fussell (New York: Summit Books, 1988), p. 25. Fussell bases his principal argument upon the well-known observation that, as the American ground forces captured islands closer to the Japanese mainland, so the Japanese stiffened their resistance to such a degree that allied 'victories' became ever more hollow (participating in the first waves of attack being tantamount to a death sentence). As an accompaniment to this observation, I refer readers to a particularly grim combat novel by Anton Myrer, in which a battle-weary Marine almost breaks down at the thought of another deployment: "All at once, poised before the fire he was inundated with fear: a dread so great it shook him to the heels and he stood there trembling, clenching his teeth. A cold, impassive fear that he would never survive this war, he would never survive the next operation. The Canal was the worst he could imagine; now they were saying this Tarawa was still worse. It sounded bad enough. How in Christ's sweet name could it be worse? But that was what they were saying." See Anton Myrer, *The Big War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p. 108.

The most blatant evidence for this was laid bare when curators at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum in Washington DC planned to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the bombings in 1995. Well planned and thoroughly researched, the proposed Enola Gay exhibition nonetheless stirred up a furore and brought down the wrath of the Air Force Association and the American Legion, as well as conservative senators who weighed in on their behalf. What upset these people had less to do with curators not doing their job properly than the feeling that they had exceeded the authority of history itself. American veterans invoked the primacy of personal experience and the exhibition was cancelled.<sup>275</sup>

Sifting through the wreckage of this watershed moment, historians found themselves asking unsettling questions as to the power of history, or lack thereof, to shape public opinion, a cynical position that segued into hypothesising the near-immovability of presuppositions surrounding specific events. In their introduction to a compendium on the controversy, Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird delicately suggest as much, preferring to term Hiroshima 'legend' even as they pave the way for weighty studies that attempt to retire it.<sup>276</sup> The problem for historians is not so much that their research is not widely read, but more that it appears confined within published histories and seldom countenanced or manifest within other cultural productions. Intervening in the standoff between supporters and detractors of the bomb's first use, they have been forced to dig in and patiently nurture their revised positions in the hope that the storm clouds of dogmatism will one day clear. Fiction writing, on the other hand, is harder to speak of in general terms and manifests substantial signs of circumvention, even outright dalliance, when assigning 'meaning' to

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275 Michael J. Hogan, "The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Representation," in *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 201.

276 Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird, "Introduction: The Legend of Hiroshima," in *Hiroshima's Shadow (Writings on the denial of history & the Smithsonian controversy)*, ed. Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird (Stony Creek: Pamphleteer's Press, 1998), p. xxxiii.

Hiroshima. Writers appear caught in the mushroom-shaped headlights and unable or unwilling to manoeuvre themselves into a position of 'composure,' though this has not stopped them from indulging in futuristic scenarios that level cities wholesale. In his study of nuclear themes in American literature, Peter Schwenger sees only a void outlining the shape of Hiroshima:

Like the white shadows burnt into the sidewalks and walls of Hiroshima, we are a blank, the mark of an absence, where the comprehension of that morning is concerned. This white mythology is admittedly an image, but only of our inability to image – an inability that all too easily shades over into denial, and the relegation of the whole city once more to the unconscious.<sup>277</sup>

Faced with little more than a stencil, this chapter will differ from prior ones in that it addresses literary trends that barely exist, or that have been stifled beneath the weight of forms acting on their behalf. Initially, the need for such an approach may appear surprising, given the volume of science fiction publications all purporting to have the 'final' word on nuclear warfare. Even before the dust had settled, writers did not hesitate to unleash their imaginations and take the reader to the very edge of global annihilation, or over it. But whereas nuclear war was a topic that went off with a chain-reacting bang, Hiroshima all but fizzled out by the end of the 1940's.

The topic's dissolution followed on two book publications of astounding hindsight and foresight, respectively. The first of these, John Hersey's *Hiroshima* (1946), awakened American readers to the (hitherto doubted) humanity of the Japanese and returned a sense of agency in terms of suffering inflicted rather than technological triumphalism ("this is what

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<sup>277</sup> Peter Schwenger, *Letter Bomb: Nuclear Holocaust and the Exploding Word*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols, Gerald Prince, and Wendy Steiner, Parallax: Re-Visions of Culture and Society (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 48.

you have done").<sup>278</sup> The second, Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence* (1948), stared into an atomic crystal ball to prophesy the possibility of New Zealand as the last habitable land ("this is what you shall be"). Of the two, Hersey's book is inarguably more impressive on many counts, but imagining a post-apocalyptic world was a literary pursuit that would endure. To write of Hiroshima was not inopportune; on the contrary, there was no better time, and Hersey put a high premium on a compassion that many found appealing. His standards would have been difficult to match even had Americans not been preoccupied with other matters, and they were. The question of their own national security simply could not wait (as writers well knew) and the result, in terms of a literary output, was predictable.<sup>279</sup> Addressing issues of nuclear proliferation was well nigh guaranteed to garner attention, whereas Hiroshima became yesterday's news, particularly after the Soviets conducted their first nuclear test in 1949, an event that sealed the image of the bomb as a Cold War emblem rather than a Pacific War debate issue.<sup>280</sup> Technologically unprecedented in 1945 but hopelessly redundant by the time of the Bikini Atoll test in 1954, Hiroshima occupied a liminal, transitional moment unto itself, which meant that, in an historical, epistemological, and creative-artistic context, it was never fully of the Pacific or the Cold War. Of course, in sheer physical terms, a city was razed in the blink of an eye, as everyone 'knew,' but this did not lead to any reflective, self-interrogating trend on the part of the allies. Rather, it had the effect of freezing many people's attitudes in situ, turning

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278 Sheila K. Johnson, *The Japanese Through American Eyes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 45.

279 Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 182.

280 To understand how powerfully persuasive science fiction scenarios of the Cold War were, we need only recall W. Warren Wagar's rhetorical questions on the matter: "Does World War III itself belong more to the Pentagon or to the writers who have waged it in hundreds of short stories, novels, and screenplays? How can firm distinctions be drawn between the battle plans stored in command-post computers and those stored in the heads of writers? Each has a way of moving and shaking the other." See W. Warren Wagar, "Truth and Fiction, Equally Strange: Writing about the Bomb," *American Literary History* 1, no. 2 (1989): p. 449.

them to stone in the reflected heat of the blast. Hersey was a blip on the radar screen and, rather than taking on the burden of 'describing' Hiroshima, later American authors of a humanitarian turn felt it both wiser and more expedient to make American indifference the principal subject of their writings.

Writings on the New Zealand position likewise detoured around Hiroshima, perhaps because the disturbing vision of New Zealand as a final outpost of human life drew more attention, but also because it was easier to see the moral responsibility for Hiroshima as resting solely with the Americans. True, the bomb's research and development had been an international effort, but the American military had decided what to do with it, a conveniently punctual fact for other allied nations. When their backs were against the wall, they had fought alongside Americans, housed them, fed them, supplied them with information, and passed legislation to make cooperation easier. But they had not dropped the bomb. The Americans had done that, so let the Americans write about it.

Mostly, however, American writers did not do so, though those who attempted the task signposted the reasons for their restrained pronouncements in unequivocal terms: Hiroshima was not a 'live' issue for most people, and so a narrative of the actual bombing held no particular fascination beyond a happenstance curiosity wholly out of keeping with the suffering involved. Far better to avoid such 'summary' treatment and address instead the manner, if not the reasons, of American disinterest. That is what we are given in Edita Morris' *The Flowers of Hiroshima* (1959), in which a young American man takes up residence in a Japanese household, wholly unaware that his landlady and her husband are *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivors). Sam's ignorance becomes the kernel around which much of the human interest turns as the narrator, Yuka, struggles to hide her scars, her sister's bitterness, and her husband's sickness, as well as more public forms of grievance and commemoration,

so that the abstract should not become personal. The sacrifice that this involves is borne out in the appeals that Yuka leaves unspoken:

Ah, there are many things in Hiroshima that I don't want you to 'dig,' dear Sam-san! Suddenly I feel about a hundred years older than you. You're so innocent – you haven't yet seen beyond our wall, beyond our defences. For your sake I hope you'll leave Hiroshima, knowing as little about it as everyone else – which is very little indeed.<sup>281</sup>

So disarmingly humble are these passages that they are in danger of crossing the line from self-effacement to self-erasure, a trait that Morris counts on to bring her readers round to a point of view sympathetic to the Japanese, though she also allows her characters to make mistakes. At one point, for example, Yuka and her husband go 'on the road' with Sam in a pell-mell drive-to-nowhere à la Dean Moriarty, only to find their rickety car breaking down and Yuka's husband suffering a fit of tiredness. On *their* road, the mechanical cannot sustain a freedom of opportunity. Instead, it has performed the opposite function, sealing the destiny of the survivors to one of social ostracism and lingering illness. By contrast, Sam is the freewheeling, easygoing, nonthinking youth transplanted from American beat culture and set down in the shaky, tremulous ruins of Hiroshima. He is not contemptible, for his ignorance is not of his own making or choosing, in fact his high-spirited bonhomie provides a glimmer of bygone optimism that Yuka handles as delicately as the flowers of the title. Yet the very fact that he is in need of protection, a staggering irony, provides a window into the gulf between Hiroshima as an unopened topic and Hiroshima as an ongoing socio-cultural, not to mention biological, disruption.

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<sup>281</sup> Edita Morris, *The Flowers of Hiroshima* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1959), p. 48.

Exercising a compassionate touch, Edita Morris exposed a generation's insouciance to the suffering that daily passed it by. Satirically blasé, Kurt Vonnegut was less inclined to pull punches. In *Cat's Cradle* (1963), he falls back on the time-honoured trope of the journey, not in the bildungsroman fashion of a drifter accumulating wisdom, but to illustrate and lament the spate of crass nothingness spewing from the *vox populi*.<sup>282</sup> His narrator's wanderlust is initially driven by the idea of researching a book on people's memories of 6<sup>th</sup> August 1945, though the area of enquiry (what Vonnegut terms a 'wampeter') soon shifts from Hiroshima to the prospect of a new, global doomsday invention, *ice-nine*, making this, strictly speaking, an apocalyptic novel. Yet the segueing of Hiroshima constitutes not so much a dissolution of its significance as its reprisal in an alternate, inescapable (philosophic and scientific) theorem. The frozen indifference of the American populace 'blankets' the social landscape, and Vonnegut simply waves a narrative wand to render it literal – for everyone. Thus we cannot perforce say that Vonnegut is toying with made-up super weapons solely as an exercise in sensationalism, rather Hiroshima constitutes the 'seed' that, improperly planted in the American conscience, sprouts into a weed of moral apathy and not the fruit of critical self-enquiry it might have been.

Before the decade was out, the Vietnam War brought up similar questions as to the moral apathy of Americans at home and abroad, and presented Edwin Lanham the chance to draw some comparisons between Vietnam's child victims of Agent Orange and the *hibakusha* in his novel, *The Clock at 8:16* (1970). Lanham's story contains obvious structural parallels to Morris': an American soldier on leave in Japan, Eli Dean tries to make contact with Takeo, with whom he has previously corresponded while remaining unaware of his

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282 Vonnegut may have unknowingly tapped into a larger literary trend that used the journey trope as a means to uncover and disclose the particulars of wartime national histories. Kathryn N. Jones has identified this in operation within French and German literature of the time. See Kathryn N. Jones, *Journeys of Remembrance: Memories of the Second World War in French and German Literature, 1960-1980* (London: LEGENDA, 2007).



friend's scarred appearance. Asked by his sister, Kumiko, to say why he never informed Eli of his condition, Takeo explains: "There are no photographs of *my* face. We were having a good correspondence and why shouldn't I continue to be what he thought I was?"<sup>283</sup> Having failed to convince her brother to meet Eli face-to-face, Kumiko acts as his representative and, as a *hibakusha* herself, confronts Eli's soldierly chauvinism. But her undeformed, in fact decidedly voluptuous body introduces a factor that Morris deliberately avoided and also sets the tone for later Manhattan Project novels. In Lanham's text, the question of a sustained military culture of indifference is not avoided, but it is sugar-coated in an eroticised personal context, the effect being a moral absolution through sexual conquest, leaving the reader with a feeling of satisfaction that displaces the morally abstract with the erotically tangible. We see this most obviously when Eli finally learns of Hiroshima's relation to his host family, a revelation that follows the moment in which he succeeds in deflowering Kumiko. Thus the knowledge that she provides him through diary entries is equalled by his power to bring new experience to her.<sup>284</sup> The narrative balancing act culminates when Eli is killed during his last tour of Vietnam, which effectively shifts grief away from the victims of the atomic bombs to a marriage that never happens. Eli had previously urged Kumiko to avoid dwelling on the past, to choose life over death, only to become part of death himself. As a result, Kumiko's suffering enlarges, and the attention on Hiroshima becomes less important than the story of one man and one woman.

Lanham's displacement of thanatos with eros finds its echo in the more frequent publications that describe the Manhattan Project, a subgenre that we shall attend to next before descending into the versicoloured, contrarian social underworld of post-apocalyptic

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<sup>283</sup> Edwin Lanham, *The Clock at 8:16* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1970), p. 17.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259-68.

New Zealand. Strange as it may first appear, stories that were given to doomsday prophecies coexisted (and continue to do so) alongside others that cast wistful glances back to the dawn of the nuclear age. For the diligent reader the reasons are not hard to find, and come down to a mutually consistent regard for the other's territory: apocalyptic novels, that is, are seldom given to recalling the history of nuclear weapons, preferring to see such efforts, as well as the practice of history itself, as a redundancy; whereas in Project novels we generally witness a narrative cut-off point that shies from imposing a presentist nuclear episteme on a time and place far removed from fears of runaway proliferation, failsafe mechanisms, and international terrorist networks. In what follows, I do not propose the disestablishment of these modalities, as in each case the reasons for their respective structures are defensible. But I shall pay special attention to the sometimes inevitable, sometimes intentional displacement of Hiroshima into an unscripted, unvisited no man's land too 'preponderate' for Project fiction and too 'settled' for global apocalyptic narratives. In all fairness, therefore, we shall give a generous nod to the constituent features of these two subgenres, but also pay close attention to the ways in which they avoid the subject of Hiroshima or otherwise displace it with their own politicised agendas.

### **Project Novels**

Almost immediately after the American public learned of the Manhattan Project, literary forms sprang up that attempted to describe it in realistic, linear terms. Typically, these narratives invested heavily in the characterisation of a select few scientists and military personnel whose integration into the Project's administrative apparatus invariably entails a sacrifice of individualism. Employing pseudonyms for the well-known public figures of Oppenheimer, Szilard, Fermi, et. al., or writing their genius onto a type of virtuosic

‘everyman,’ the narrative goes on to describe the scientist’s dissatisfaction with the institutionalisation he is subjected to and uses the tension as a means to engage in a socio-political critique and / or manifesto. The structural potential for a retrospective meditation on the path that led to Hiroshima has therefore always existed, though it has hardly ever manifested despite the frequency of Project novels over the years. The location of the didactic component in a type of attenuated appendix form, after the fact of the Project’s completion and following on from the end of the Pacific War, explains why meditations on Hiroshima tend to peter out; when V-J Day arrives, the time to discuss Hiroshima has already passed and the void is filled by more ‘current’ affairs. This means that, if writers venture anything about Hiroshima, they must find room for their philosophising alongside or within the narrative of the Project’s development. Scientists, in short, must be made to seem morally contemplative as well as productive, which was an unlikely situation, as one of them made clear in an article:

Before Hiroshima, we scientists worked frantically. First, to build an atomic bomb before the Germans did. And second, to bring to an end the awful carnage of that terrible war. Under that kind of pressure, there was little or no time to think about sociological problems, and, since we did not even know whether a bomb could be built at all, it was hard to take any such philosophical thoughts seriously.<sup>285</sup>

So creative writers didn’t either. In any case, the Project scientists’ studied disinterest toward the ramifications of ‘the gadget’ gave writers enough suspense-driven intendments to play around with, and if it also allowed them to reinvest in the shoulder-shrugging trend of compliance, not-so-deftly outmanoeuvring the ‘afterwards’ part of the story, that was a handy side effect. Thus a key reason for the endurance of Project literature lies not so much

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285 R. R. Wilson, "Hiroshima: The Scientists' Social and Political Reaction," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 140, no. 3 (1996): p. 350.

in the questions that it asks so much as its capacity to avoid the more awkward ones, though one should not strictly judge it as an exercise in philosophical absenteeism. No doubt it would be a step too far to say that Project fiction has as its primary motive an obfuscation and, naturally, the story of the Manhattan Project is one (or several) worth telling, and yet it remains inseparably tied to the result of the Project's efforts: the atomic explosions themselves. Thus my contention is that, rather than seeking an accommodation with literature which gives close attention to *hibakusha*, Project fiction has sought to isolate and 'contain' the theme of victimisation within its own narrative parameters.<sup>286</sup>

Aside from the cursory schematic I have provided, a couple of other qualities are consistent enough within Project fiction to merit mention. Firstly, there is a fixation upon the mind of the scientist as an anomalous object, prone to fantastic feats of ingenuity but just as capable of exhibiting the more egregious social neuroses of the time. He could be a cool, level-headed visionary tirelessly working for the betterment of humanity – or, in his 'Dr. Strangelove' incarnation, an obsessive-compulsive martinet. Throughout the Cold War, nuclear-themed fiction and films continued to hold the scientist accountable not only for the creation of the bomb, but for the prevalence of nuclear anxiety that readers encountered in daily life, and Project fiction certainly toyed with scapegoating of this sort.<sup>287</sup> Keeping recriminations in check, however, was a heavy investment in the mythologisation of the Project as one of the greatest scientific feats ever undertaken. Nothing about this assertion was inappropriate, for the earliest publicly-reported celebrations of the scientists' success employed procreational language that implied a clear link between the Manhattan

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<sup>286</sup> In speaking of 'containing' I have in mind Alan Nadel's helpful study of the ways in which American Cold War culture acted to restrict critical public enquiry in order to enforce conformity. See Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*, ed. Donald E. Pease, New Americanists (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

<sup>287</sup> John T. Dorsey, "The Responsibility of the Scientist in Atomic Bomb Literature," *Comparative Literature Studies* 24, no. 3 (1987): p. 277.

Project and the dawn of the nuclear age.<sup>288</sup> It was meet and fitting to speak of it in laudatory terms, perhaps even one's bounden duty if one felt, as several newspaper cartoonists did, that the bomb was akin to a sceptre signifying international authority.<sup>289</sup> Much less fitting was the treasonous notion that the scientists were not all of a piece, a revisionist position that Margot Norris has put forward, reminding us that there were, in fact, two Projects, one in Los Alamos and the other in Chicago, the latter playing host to émigré scientists who remained or became politically active and morally outspoken in ways that ran contrary to the wishes of the military apparatus.<sup>290</sup> Needless to say, their story is downplayed or otherwise omitted from early Project fiction, which stresses the Los Alamos component above all, and when later publications begin to allow for more pluralistic political stances, a narrative countermeasure is taken in the form of increased emphasis upon romance. That is the basic literary trend, and so to a closer examination of the principal exemplars.

By anyone's standards, the first Project novel must be granted special status as an outright peculiarity. To my mind, the only way to approach Upton Sinclair's *O Shepherd, Speak!* (1949) is as a botched attempt to reinstate the epic notion of divine intervention on the human plane. Sinclair's would-be demigod, Lanny Budd, is as unbending and multifarious as any archaic deity and likewise has his fingers in so many pies that he almost appears to be steering the entire war, though it is truer to say that he just happens to be present at almost every major turn. Various employed as an art expert, presidential agent, military interrogator, trauma therapist-cum-hypnotist, acting colonel, father, husband, and

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288 Peggy Rosenthal, "The Nuclear Mushroom Cloud as Cultural Image," *American Literary History* 3, no. 1 (1991): p. 66.

289 Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and its Legacies*, 3rd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. xxiv.

290 Margot Norris, "Dividing the Indivisible: The Fissured Story of the Manhattan Project," *Cultural Critique*, no. 35 (1996): p. 8.

associate of Roosevelt, Hitler, Stalin, Paton, and Einstein, to name a few, Budd is the personification of what every numbed, footsore, uninformed dogface must have wished himself to be: at the scene and on the case. Mercifully, this does not extend to Hiroshima, though it manages to take in the Battle of the Bulge, the last moments of Roosevelt's life, the liberation of Dachau, and some above-board conversations with Hermann Göring. To contemporary readers, the blow-by-blow account seems banal, absurd, even amateurish. We have grown used to tales of the common soldier that proceed without recourse to 'grant events,' showing that, as the saying goes, war is boredom punctuated by terror. It is worth noting, however, that at the time of publication no single wartime event or phenomenon stood out more than any others, and thus all were fair game to play with and shuffle around. Seen this way, Sinclair's work functions as a stock check, wherein a lot of things are itemised but not stared at fully. For all its (considerable) length, it remains a breezy, light-hearted, serendipitous voyage into the truly unknown, which makes it valuable as an illustration of misbegotten notions commonplace enough to warrant no apologia. One of these is of Los Alamos as "a secret society, a consecrated utopia", a glamorous rendition of what was, after all, a heavily guarded campsite, though Sinclair does, in fact, give much attention to the Los Alamos security procedures and a run-through of the Trinity test – safe, practical topics that set the tone for what follows.<sup>291</sup> Hiroshima and Nagasaki themselves hardly figure at all in the text, largely because Sinclair cannot restrain his eagerness to launch into a socialist critique of postwar American society, but also because the humanisation of the enemy is a privilege reserved for the German arena in his novel. Throughout Europe, Budd rubs noses with various bigwigs, but the same courtesy is not granted the Japanese who remain essentially 'faceless,' true to the manner of so many

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<sup>291</sup> Upton Sinclair, *O shepherd, speak!* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1950), p. 334.

depictions. 'Effacing' the enemy allows Hiroshima to pass without a human reckoning, and explains why authors like Morris and Vonnegut were struck by the ignorance of the American public. Their works paint a picture (more accurately, the blindness of those who are barely aware that a picture exists) on a canvas that authors like Sinclair leave blank.

More sophisticated than Sinclair's work is Michael Amrine's *Secret* (1950), which heralds one of the first fully-realised portraits of the Project scientist and also illustrates the beginnings of a structural avoidance of Hiroshima through displaced victimisation. The picture that Amrine initially draws once again takes the Project toward a utopian turn:

It was a city of young people, scientists and war workers, a city overfed, glutted with money for workers and knowledge for scientists, and the nights were long. The city was hidden from the world and the families hid from each other. The birthrate was the highest in America, and it became a city of tiny children, it was a place of atoms and woods and children. Their laughter was everywhere in the Happy Valley.<sup>292</sup>

If there is a snake in this garden it cannot represent knowledge, for that is already present in abundance, rather it comprises an avaricious interference in the day-to-day running of the operation. Confronting this covetous behaviour is Halverson, an Oppenheimer stand-in, who comes across as a sensitive, emotional, altogether *reluctant* Project participant who despises the military, first on administrative and political grounds, then in moral terms. While listening to a pontificating colonel, Halverson realises that "The trouble with the Army mind was that it was an extreme extension of the philosophical concept that no man can envision his own death."<sup>293</sup> Diagnoses of this sort lead to exculpation of the scientist, or more properly a martyrdom that seeks to shoulder the moral burden of the bomb's

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<sup>292</sup> Michael Amrine, *Secret* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1950), p. 46-47.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

development to such an extent that it is the scientist rather than victims of his creation that becomes the object of pity. Evasiveness is built into this arrangement, part of which involves emphasising the interminable ideological collisions between the Army and those Project scientists more inclined toward civilian administrative procedure. This is made easier by the infamously bureaucratic nature of the Project, and also by the familiarity of the 1950's readership with the military euphemisms of the war years. It was easier, and more universally familiar, to talk of how people could become lost in paperwork than to acknowledge the literal entombment that was Hiroshima. Bureaus, offices, departments, committees, and functionaries draw our attention at every turn. Over-reliant on this wall of words, the novel skims over the destruction of Hiroshima, dwelling only upon a series of human curiosities, such as one survivor who had been partially protected by a garden fence, leaving his skin 'leonine.'<sup>294</sup> The story concludes with a feature common to Project literature in other countries: the scientist's moral crusade against nuclear weapons, impelled by fear, distantly aware of Hiroshima, but having more to do with vague and muddled suspicions that the United States military cannot be trusted to exercise restraint.<sup>295</sup>

As in Sinclair's case, the wife figure in Amrine's novel remains in the background, not yet transformed into a redeeming agent. This changes in Haakon Chevalier's *The Man Who Would Be God* (1960), a novel that charts the scientist's fall from charismatic polymath to monomaniacal automaton, observing this process partially through the eyes of those closest to him. Although Chevalier is distracted by updating the Project narrative to reflect the

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>295</sup> John Dorsey has noted this aspect in German literature on the Manhattan Project. See John T. Dorsey, "Atomic Bomb Literature in Japan and the West," *Neohelicon: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* 14, no. 2 (1987): p. 331.



fears that pervaded the Communist witch hunts of the late 1950's, the main thrust comes from portraying the scientist as suffering from a Faustian or Frankenstein-style obsession that eventually consumes him.<sup>296</sup> Acting the part of a tragic chorus, the wife goes from the submissive alter ego of Sinclair and Amrine to a worrisome, suspicious, morally astute (but not too articulate) dissenter. Not yet a chief actor, she voluntarily absents herself or is otherwise secluded from the bulk of the narrative, where she remains in mute (or briefly henpecking) opprobrium, a sure sign that something is rotten in the state of New Mexico. Representative of the chauvinism is this extraordinary passage:

Tanya was waiting up for him when he got home – though he had at last made her understand that he had resolved to forgo all sexual indulgence during this difficult period when the embryo of the Monster was coming to maturity. She had contrived to seduce him several times in the last year and a half, and as he found her, not less, but rather more, desirable than ever, he had had to harden himself against her.<sup>297</sup>

In a typical piece of Cold War discourse, feminine sexuality is here both an aberrant site of danger and a force for redemption. To remain resistant is to let go a final lifeline and plunge headlong into an abyss of dehumanisation, yet capitulating involves an emasculation that threatens the future of the Project. Such is the impossible choice that confronts the scientist, and by the end of the novel he has made it, metamorphosing into a *dominus factotum* at the beck and call of the military.

Twenty years later, the subject of atomic research, past or present, was proving almost impossible to imagine without the spectre of Soviet espionage, and authors freely

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<sup>296</sup> For an examination of literary models that inform depictions of the scientist in Cold War fiction, see D. H. Dowling, "The Atomic Scientist: Machine or Moralist?," *Science Fiction Studies* 13, no. 39 (1986).

<sup>297</sup> Haakon Chevalier, *The Man Who Would Be God* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), p. 306.

indulged their imagination in this respect, even as pointed questions regarding the necessity of Hiroshima began to arise. In their novel, *Fair Warning* (1980), George E. Simpson and Neal R. Burger provide an intriguing scene of President Truman being told by admirals and generals that the bomb is inexpedient, and remaining obdurate that, if not militarily justifiable, its value lies in political leverage.<sup>298</sup> Tantalising though they are, these revisionist moments play second fiddle to the rise of the Cold War espionage thriller, which culminated in Joseph Kanon's hardboiled novel, *Los Alamos* (1997). Publishing two years after the Smithsonian controversy, Kanon manages to retain some revisionist material, most obviously disseminated through the character of the émigré scientist Eisler, who comes closest to criticising the bomb's manufacture and whose suicide is framed as atonement. When it emerges that Eisler has been passing documents to the Soviets, however, the nature of the atonement comes under question and we may say that Kanon's decision to leave Eisler's martyrdom unexplained illustrates his regard for a readership altogether unready for the narrative of Hiroshima as a mistake.

Up until the present day, Project novels have steadily enlarged the space in which issues pertinent to Hiroshima find expression, but even as this becomes more evident so the variety of literary countermeasures become more evident in turn. What is perhaps surprising is that the novels show no indications of collapsing under the weight of this arrangement. On the contrary, the latest Project novel, Nora Gallagher's *Changing Light* (2007), goes further than any other in its insistence on the moral ambiguity of Hiroshima. Most of the story takes place in New Mexico, which is romanticised as a land of past civilisations, unique architecture, and animistic Pueblos, all of which stand in

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298 George E. Simpson and Neal R. Burger, *Fair Warning* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1980), p. 170.

contradistinction to the Project's fast-paced drive to completion.<sup>299</sup> Unaware of the polarity is Eleanor Garrigue, a New York artist who, while seeking refuge from her domineering, sexist husband, helps shelter a young scientist, Leo, who has fallen sick from radiation poisoning. In due course, their harlequin-style romance proceeds in predictable fashion, all of which distracts from what would otherwise move toward an insightful rumination on the nature of the bomb. Leo's own story takes him toward a point of moral doubt, fed in large part by witnessing a friend's overexposure to and subsequent death from radiation. Hitherto, Leo had envisaged the moment of the bomb's explosion as the sole source of its destructive power, but his friend's fatal exposure in the laboratory brings home its unique nature. The damage that it will unleash, that is, becomes a personal, no longer abstract, notion, and the Army's unwillingness to register the event suggests to Leo that what the scientists' unwittingly ignore the Army knowingly conceals. Unable to reconcile himself to this moral apathy, Leo makes a deduction: "He saw, even as the scientists had thought they were the smart ones, who had been in charge all along. What came to his mind was simple. Los Alamos was not a lab, it was a factory. The people who owned the bomb will own the world."<sup>300</sup> Taking the theme of the disgruntled scientist to its logical conclusion, Gallagher has Leo turn escape artist, and the first image we have of him is of someone who creeps under fences while recalling the plight of his sister, a concentration camp prisoner in Europe.<sup>301</sup> The equivalence of these two people, one in a death camp, the other manufacturing death on a mass scale, is intriguing and we might ask why it should be more

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299 Cyndy Hendershot has noted how Project fiction struggles to represent the industrial alongside the natural and the premodern, alternately seeing the Project as an intrusion and as an appropriate fixture in the surrounding landscape. See Cyndy Hendershot, "Mythical and Modern: Representations of Los Alamos," *Journal of the Southwest* 41, no. 4 (1999): p. 478.

300 Nora Gallagher, *Changing Light* (New York: Vintage, 2007), p. 110.

301 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

desirable to remember Los Alamos as a death-producing 'camp' than to recall Hiroshima. But as with prior Project novels, the answer is that it locates victims within the national borders of the United States, not beyond it, making it the scientist's suffering that we see most of all.

### **Lifeboat New Zealand**

In the postwar period through the Cold War years, Project novels stood apart from other science fictions in several respects. Most obviously of all, in their world the bomb is still a theoretical proposition rather than a production-line reality, which allows for a certain amount of guilelessness wholly unknown in subsequent scientific communities. As an American invention and, however briefly, an American monopoly, the bomb of these stories is not yet attached to the notion of nuclear proliferation and therefore appears anchored and 'manageable,' even as the gap between what the scientists surmise and what the readers know suggests otherwise. Project novels, that is, offered a way to look back nostalgically to the dawn of the nuclear era without harping on the ever-present fears with which Americans lived. By contrast, apocalyptic stories suggested that the world was inbound to a point of no return, and although it is now clear that nuclear fictions predated World War II and may even have inspired the work of some wartime scientists and politicians, there can be little doubt that postwar apocalyptic fiction took on a grim, no longer fanciful tone once the scale of nuclear weaponry, both in its deployment and destructive potential, became clear.<sup>302</sup> Indeed, so absolute were the dire predictions of

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302 For surveys of prewar nuclear-themed science fiction writing and speculations as to its influence beyond the literary world, see Mark L. Brake and Neil Hook, *Different Engines: How Science drives Fiction and Fiction drives Science* (London: Macmillan, 2008), p. 104-5.; and H. Bruce Franklin, "Fatal Fictions: A Weapon to End all Wars," in *The Nightmare Considered: Critical Essays on Nuclear War Literature*, ed. Nancy Anisfield (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1991).

nuclear apocalyptic fiction that most scholars have tacitly assumed that dividing productions along national lines (whether by author's origin or imagined narrative locale) is a pointless exercise. There are only two exceptions to the rule, the first being literature written by Japanese, who are granted 'privileged' status by dint of their 'exposure' to a victimhood unknown elsewhere. The second is literature that imagines a survival made possible by the fortunes of geography, a role that fell to New Zealand more than anywhere else and which was later entertained in public policy circles.

To see how and why New Zealanders were drawn into imagining themselves in a post-apocalyptic world we first need to recall the climate of fear that set the stage, and then chart the various science fictions that preceded and possibly gave birth to 'nonfictional' policy-driven publications and the creation of New Zealand's 'nuclear-free' identity. The journey begins with Hiroshima, for in the bomb's capacity to destroy an entire city a discomforting future appeared over the horizon, dimly at first, then more insistently. This was nothing more complicated, or more challenging, than the phantom vision of an enemy deploying a similar weapon against one's own population centres. Admittedly, the nightmare scenario bothered Americans far more than anyone else. Non-nuclear and / or peripheral nations such as New Zealand did not initially entertain such fears, except possibly in a vicarious sense, taking it as assumed (when they took it at all) that the preferred target in any nuclear attack (what was later termed a 'first strike') would be a country that possessed the capacity to respond in kind. That was not then, nor was it ever likely to be New Zealand, and thus the news media of the 1940's gave consideration to nuclear themes and issues drawn from ongoing developments in the northern hemisphere, a trend that continued until the 'nuclear-free' movement came of age in the late 1960's.

In the immediate aftermath of Hiroshima, American fretfulness was temporarily subsumed beneath a narrative of technological advances that promised to revolutionise everyday life, particularly in terms of energy supply.<sup>303</sup> This perspective persisted until the Bikini Atoll test in 1946 and even beyond, although to the canny observer there was always a sinister overlap between the push-button conveniences of a household kitchen and the military procedures associated with nuclear weaponry.<sup>304</sup> The mutually reinforcing connotations meant that the comforts and time-saving devices of the domestic sphere could ironically leave one feeling more powerless than ever before, a sentiment literalised in Richard Matheson's horror novel, *The Shrinking Man* (1956). So inescapably 'present' was the prospect of nuclear apocalypse that in the 1940's United States policymakers seriously considered building cities underground, surely the most extreme symptom of the need to decouple the domestic civilian world from a nuclear totality.<sup>305</sup> What became of that idea is less important, as far as this study is concerned, than the getaway impulse behind it. Once people began building fallout shelters in their backyards, the step from a retreat beneath the soil toward the imagination of lifeboat-style prospects 'Down Under' was not long in coming and followed as a matter of course.<sup>306</sup> Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence* (1948) was the first novel to indulge the premise, imagining a post-apocalyptic world in which New Zealand has somehow maintained a working infrastructure, a faith in science and reason, and a willingness to explore the irradiated zones of less fortunate lands. Rather than

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303 Scott C. Zeman, "'Taking Hell's Measurements': Popular Science and Popular Mechanics Magazines and the Atomic Bomb from Hiroshima to Bikini," *Journal of Popular Culture* 41, no. 4 (2008): p. 695-6.

304 Daniel Wójcik, *The End of the World as we Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 102-3.

305 Mitchell Reiss, "The Future That Never Came," *The Wilson Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1995): p. 48.

306 Literary scholar Lawrence Jones experienced a recurrent nightmare of nuclear war prior to his move from Oregon to New Zealand in the 1960's, though he makes clear that emigration was as much informed by his disenchantment with the American political climate as the prospect of a nuclear showdown. See Lawrence Jones, "The Mushroom Cloud, the Long White Cloud and the Cloud of Unknowing," *Landfall* 203(2002).

beginning with Australia or Papua New Guinea, the New Zealand 'Rediscovery Expedition' alights in California in the year 2108, where they encounter a mass of devil-worshipping, baby-sacrificing, corpse-exhuming locals whose practices, though barbaric, are all traceable to 'the Thing.' Alternately overdone and understated, Huxley's narrative is at its strongest during an amoralizing epitaph to the blunders of Western civilisation rendered by an 'Arch-Vicar' who, alone among the Californians, has read enough history to wax ironical when a presumptuous New Zealander upholds the virtues of science and humanism. It is this 'native,' with his instinctive, animalistic distrust of 'civilisation,' who educates the New Zealand ambassador rather than vice-versa, and thus the novel errs more toward didacticism than literary innovation.<sup>307</sup> The form anticipated John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids* (1955), another British novel that likewise imagines a postlapsarian religion, this time based in Newfoundland although the culture of the community is redolent more of seventeenth-century Salem than anywhere else. Though not devil-worshipping, the denizens of this novel embrace infanticide with alacrity, following a religious mandate to moral guardianship intertwined with a eugenicist directive to guard against deformities (termed 'offences'). The rule and its practice suits everyone except for a small group of outwardly unblemished children who are driven to despair in concealing their one congenital distinction: a telepathy capable of communicating across tremendous distances. Choosing to go on the run, they establish contact with New Zealand, a land where telepathy is the rule rather than the exception. Huxley's dour criticism of the arrogance upholding science and reason gives way here to the heady optimism of a diaspora converging on New Zealand as a promised land of friendly, cooperative, if somewhat arrogant pundits who state their position in the following terms: "We are the New People – your kind of people. The

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307 Aldous Huxley, *Ape and Essence* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 87-99.

people who can think-together. We're the people who are going to build a new kind of world – different from the Old People's world, and from the savages'."<sup>308</sup> Entrenched in this imperative is a distant reflection on the much-trumpeted success of New Zealand's welfare state in the 1950's, though once New Zealanders themselves began to imagine what a post-apocalyptic society might look like they were less given to idealisations.

Nor were they alone in their scepticism. Across the Tasman, some began to reconsider whether human survival in the aftermath of an atomic war was at all likely, or, granting the premise, desirable. Among the most frequently cited nuclear fictions, Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* (1957) gained widespread attention partly because it mercilessly pulled the plug on the notion of an Oceanic 'safe zone' beyond the reach (or consideration) of antagonists in the northern hemisphere. Following a nuclear war, apparently kicked off by an Albanian attack on Naples, the crew of an American submarine take refuge in Australia, only to find that their new home grants them a stay of execution, no more. With a cloud of nuclear fallout drifting ever closer, the chances of survival fade away until the imminent prospect of a lingering death drives people to suicidal despair. Even there, Shute seems to be saying, even there.<sup>309</sup> Just as cynical, Janet Frame likewise chose to see disaster as inescapable, though more in terms of its socio-cultural origins than its death-dealing results. Her novel, *Intensive Care* (1970), antedates the state-endorsed normalisation of global catastrophe to the Great War, which instils an unending willingness to mass homicide in its participants. Home from the war, one of the New Zealand veterans, Tom Livingstone, makes a quick adjustment back to civilian life and takes up work in a cement factory. The

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308 John Wyndham, *The Chrysalids* (London: Michael Joseph, 1955), p. 222.

309 In a retrospective article, Philip Beidler draws attention to the setting of Shute's novel: "A nice geographic touch for the times, in both book and movie, is its setting in Australia, a vivid, interesting place of great appeal to post-World War II Americans. A vigorous young democracy of the land down under, something of a Pacific counterpart or national alter-ego, quaintly British and brawlingly American, it had figured highly in the Pacific War against the Japanese." See Philip Beidler, "Remembering *On the Beach*," *War, Literature, and the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 21(2009): p. 374.



transition is deceptive, however, for Tom remains fascinated by images whose symbolic value attests to the war's continual hold over his mind. Foremost among these is the factory's flame, responsible for controlling furnace pressure and also emblematic of the 'eternal flame' of (frequently military) memory found at memorials and epitaphs all over the world. Tom's gaze is dedicated but not restive, and certainly not reflective, except in the ironical sense common to Frame's writing. Through him, we gradually come to see the human mind as a series of pistons, pulleys, flares, and levers, hardly as distinct from the world of the mechanical as we would like to assume. This in itself is a disturbing hypothesis, but Frame goes further still, suggesting that the en masse militarisation of modern man has created a permanent, demonstrable interface between mechanical warfare and the mechanics of the human mind, such that the notion of death on a vast scale no longer occasions resistance, or even surprise. Within this apparently nondescript 'bloke,' the well-practiced urge to kill rests imperfectly disarmed, ever ready for reactivation. As Frame puts it:

Died and died and died in the War. Because the War never ended, they forgot the trick of ending it, because they didn't know it was still going on and on and on, and if they saw it was there they kept looking away and pretending it wasn't there, like with the mental people.<sup>310</sup>

Less a comment on demobilisation in the practical sense, in this passage Frame is suggesting an ongoing recirculation of wartime prerogatives in national cultures such that, with every passing conflict, their use grows steadily more tolerable until societies become conditioned to war without their knowing it. When a third world war wipes out much of the global population in a subsequent section of the novel, the hypothesis appears vindicated and New

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310 Janet Frame, *Intensive Care* (Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1987), p. 86.

Zealand, though intact to a degree, responds to the disaster with a series of well-managed purges.

Frame's work sounded the death knell to the notion of a post-apocalyptic survival in New Zealand predicated on social exceptionalism. Kiwis were as bad as the rest, she implied, they just had fewer opportunities to show it. More light-hearted in its prognosis was Colin Gibson's *The Pepper Leaf* (1971), a mischievous novel that seems every bit as reflective of the ideals behind hippie communes as a consideration of what post-apocalyptic society would look like. Part nudist holiday, part tramping adventure, part acid trip, Gibson's story envisages a global destruction born more of atmospheric testing than nuclear war. But that is beside the point. In order to try and evade the universal teleology that Frame foresaw, Gibson constructs a New Zealand society that resorts to compulsive medication as a way to recondition people toward more loving behaviours. All of this takes place on 'decontamination farms,' facilities that are more concerned with instilling ethics than removing radiation, although they do establish a drug dependency "powerful enough to induce a Nirvana-like state or Right Being."<sup>311</sup> Far out! But ultimately only a souped-up cousin of Frame's institutional nightmares, since both authors draw heavily on the premise of a post-apocalyptic state government refashioning itself in the manner of a sanatorium. Writings such as these reserve the bulk of their criticism for the heavy-handedness of utopian or dystopian political bodies, having little if anything to say about the chaotic social disruptions that would follow a nuclear holocaust. In short, they remain essentially coherent, with recognisable structures (the government, the family, private business) bent

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<sup>311</sup> Colin Gibson, *The Pepper Leaf* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), p. 35.

out of shape yet still in evidence.<sup>312</sup> Authors did better when they steered clear of the didactic mode to imagine a world recovered from, rather than coming to terms with a nuclear apocalypse. That is what we are given in American author Poul Anderson's short story collection, *Maurai & Kith* (1982), a work that coincided with, and possibly tapped into, a rising sense of antinuclear sentiment in New Zealand. From the mid-1970's, this movement exhibited itself most obviously through a 'Peace Squadron' of small boats that protested against the docking of nuclear-capable vessels in New Zealand ports, most famously of all in January 1979 when one protester managed to climb on board the submarine USS *Haddo* as it entered port.<sup>313</sup> In a fascinating take on this standoff, Anderson imagines a futuristic seaborne conflict between an ecologically-minded Māori technocracy and the 'sky people,' descendants of those Americans who have survived the worst of a nuclear war. Anderson even goes the same route as Walter M. Miller Jr.'s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960), suggesting that a recovered world civilisation would eventually rediscover nuclear weapons and use them again. This cyclical doomsday scenario is pre-empted by the Māori, who act the part of the world's scientific conscience and global police force all-in-one. Only a culture such as theirs, with sufficient warrior spirit, earth wisdom, and scientific know-how, is able to balance the odds.<sup>314</sup>

In 1987, fiction became reality and the New Zealand government announced its nuclear-free status to the world. The enactment of legislation had more to do with refusing visitations from foreign vessels that might conceivably participate in a nuclear conflict than

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312 In his bibliography of nuclear holocaust-themed fiction, Paul Briens notes that writers who take up the subject do so with a handicap unknown to other 'war' literature. For a summary of these, see Paul Briens, *Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction, 1895-1984* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1987), p. 3.

313 Kevin Clements, *Back from the Brink: The Creation of a Nuclear-Free New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin / Port Nicholson Press, 1988), p. 108-16.

314 Poul Anderson, "Progress," in *Maurai & Kith* (New York: Tor, 1982), p. 132-33.

preparing for a post-apocalyptic future. Under the terms of the legislation, American naval vessels could still pay visits, though in practice this was unlikely given the United States Navy's policy of nondisclosure where enquiries after nuclear armament were concerned. For some New Zealanders, the partial severance of the ANZUS alliance left them feeling disconcertingly adrift, no longer sheltered under the umbrella of the American superpower.<sup>315</sup> Another school of thought, however, counselled that, if not necessarily increasing the risks of nuclear war, the unquestioning adherence of alliance members to the status quo resulted in no foreseeable way of extricating themselves from the nuclear deadlock. As one publication put it, "The most promising path to reducing the risk of nuclear war, while preserving regional peace, independence and security, is collective action by Pacific nations, especially American allies."<sup>316</sup> This resistant, buccaneering refusal to toe the line was captured during Prime Minister David Lange's participation in the Oxford Union debate of 1985. Recalling the moment in his memoir, Lange had no doubts as to the efficacy of his position: "We were being told by the United States that we could not decide for ourselves how to defend ourselves, but had to let others decide that for us. That, I said, was exactly the totalitarianism we were fighting against. The audience roared."<sup>317</sup> The passage of nuclear-free legislation under the Lange government set an example that other Pacific Island nations could consider, though detractors pointed out that it amounted to no more than a gesture on the global stage and that attention would be better focused on

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315 This was true politically as well as militarily, as the New Zealand decision to become nuclear-free resulted in the exclusion of any Prime Ministerial visit to the White House for eleven years. See James M. McCormick, "The New Zealand - United States Relationship in the Era of Globalization," in *Sovereignty Under Siege?: Globalisation And New Zealand*, ed. Robert Patman and Christ Rudd, *Critical Security Series* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 216.

316 Peter Hayes, Lyuba Zarsky, and Walden Bello, *American Lake: Nuclear Peril in the Pacific* (Ringwood, Vic., Australia: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 11.

317 David Lange, *Nuclear Free: The New Zealand Way* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 115.

what a post-apocalyptic future would look like in New Zealand.<sup>318</sup> In fact, as the epigraph to this chapter underscores, the prospect of the country sustaining the last vestiges of human life after a nuclear holocaust had long since moved from fantasy to an ongoing public debate issue.<sup>319</sup> The matter of vessels carrying nuclear weapons (cause) and what to do if life should become unsustainable in the rest of the world (effect) were never far removed from one another, though it was harder to know what best to do in the case of the latter. Fresh attempts to stir up and direct public motivation came in the form of two publications, released in 1987, which explored the topic in more detail. Each faced the challenge of outlining one or several 'likely' policy scenarios, most of which amounted to little more than castles in the air, predicated as they were upon the shifting terrain of a speculative imagination that (necessarily and inevitably) tapered off into unanswerable rhetorical questions. These questions were not impertinent, but they inhabited a literary form that acted to restrict rather than liberate their ramifications, the nature of which had been better delivered in science fiction publications. The idea of repopulating the planet from New Zealand and of taking refugees from northern countries, for example, recalled Huxley and Shute's scenarios.<sup>320</sup> What they needed was some way of grounding their topic in tangible exemplars, and in this the authors might have benefitted from the testimonies of

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318 To get the measure of how seriously the issue was taken in the news media, see Ron Locker, "After the nukes," *NZ Listener*, 6 July 1985; Finlay Macdonald, "A frozen darkness," *NZ Listener*, 28 February 1987.

319 Even to this day, New Zealand remains desirable as a 'lifeboat' for those who prophesy global apocalypse, though the discourse has shifted from nuclear to environmental destruction. In 2008, Halina Ogonowska-Coates, of Radio New Zealand, identified the need for 'refuge' as an incentive that prompts environmentally-conscious people to take (and perhaps create) New Zealand as a haven. Her documentary, 'Escape to New Zealand,' is available online, courtesy of the BBC World Service. For a URL, see [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/documentaries/2008/05/080430\\_global\\_perspective\\_six.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/documentaries/2008/05/080430_global_perspective_six.shtml)

320 A. Barrie Pittock, *Beyond Darkness: Nuclear Winter in Australia and New Zealand* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1987), p. 132.; Wren Green, Tony Cairns, and Judith Wright, *New Zealand after Nuclear War* (Wellington: New Zealand Planning Council, 1987), p. 129-32.

those who had already survived a nuclear explosion and lived to tell of it.<sup>321</sup> But at no point did these or any other public documents make extensive reference to Hiroshima, nor did a nuclear-free identity translate, *ipso facto*, into increased interest in or sympathy toward the Japanese. On the contrary, as we have seen already in Chapter 2, New Zealand and American cultural productions were unable to look past Japanese economic power in the 1980's. Admittedly, the 'Hiroshima Day' marches that New Zealanders had participated in for over forty years suggested that not everyone was ignorant of past precedents, but, as elsewhere, these events had more to do with raising awareness of campaign issues than historical ones.<sup>322</sup> On the page or on the streets, Hiroshima appeared to have little to do with New Zealanders and thus we may speak of a nuclear-free identity not only in terms of a policy directive but as a condition of widespread amnesia partly upheld by the term's compulsively futuristic signifiers.

Up until now, we have been concerned with the literary history backed up behind New Zealand's political development, although, having taken us to this point, it would surely be a step too far to imagine the nuclear-free identity as the offspring of an authorial desire for self-preservation. The roots of the movement are too multifarious to uphold any point of singularity, and rather than speaking of literature as driving change within a specific national context, we should instead see it as a manifestation of a generalised anxiety common throughout the Anglophone world, one that was born in and forged by the

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321 Robert Jay Lifton released a book that same year containing an essay reprint that undertook this project. In this, he suggests that although Hiroshima cannot compare to modern-day nuclear explosions it nonetheless contains significant truths as to the totality of destruction, the weapon's unending lethal influence, and the victims' self-identification as victims. See Robert Jay Lifton, "Is Hiroshima our Text?," in *The Future of Immortality and Other Essays for a Nuclear Age*, ed. Robert Jay Lifton (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

322 Tom Newnham, *Peace Squadron: The sharp end of nuclear protest in New Zealand* (Auckland: Graphic Publications, 1986), p. 5.; Paul Boyer, "Exotic Resonances: Hiroshima in American Memory," in *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 159.

aftermath of Hiroshima. The ideas and fears that found expression in fiction may have stoked the fires of imagination for New Zealanders at certain times, but it is just as probable that the nuclear-free movement arose in response to a preservationist impulse held in common with but not necessarily taken from science fiction writing. Then, of course, there was the peace movement, which did not necessarily advance the aims of (national) 'self'-preservation so much as a global humanitarianism. Having given a humble bow to those activists whose idealism, no matter its origins, inspired the people and government of New Zealand to take the steps that they did, we may say with more certainty that the subsequent nuclear-free culture shows no sign of diminishing but has undergone a commodification that reduces its visibility to the realm of music, artwork, documentary film, and, more obviously still, a mass of tourist wares, from cups to woolly jumpers, all sporting the nuclear-free logo or a gestural equivalent.<sup>323</sup> In short, while the nuclear-free identity remains enshrined in political discourse, it has also transmuted into a generalised fashion sentiment, which leaves literary ventures that turn back the clock to the (decidedly more pro-nuclear) 1940's in danger of looking passé – unless the author in question chooses to graft the combative political activism of the 1970's and 1980's onto the wartime period. Such is the route followed by James George, the first New Zealand author to address the topic of the atomic bombings some sixty years after the events came to pass.

Needless to say, finding an 'address' is not easy after that length of time. Like a scribbled note stuffed in the back pocket of a threadbare garment that then gets thrown in the washing machine, it is likely to have faded to illegibility. More correctly, then, *Ocean*

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323 The power of antinuclear tourist products to reinforce or trivialise the socio-political convictions on which they are based is an important, ongoing question for New Zealanders. Certainly, there is nothing new in making capital out of protest imagery, as Roderic Alley noted in 1986: "Today, the anti-nuclear symbol, a nuclear warhead with a diagonal slash through it, has become a familiar sight in New Zealand's cities - displayed in stores, sold on 'Nukebuster' T-shirts, and spray-painted on walls." Since then, commercial antinuclear tourist products have 'exploded' while antinuclear graffiti has declined in visibility, and perhaps in frequency as well. See Roderic Alley, "Trouble in Paradise," *The Wilson Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1986): p. 76.

*Roads* (2006) is a novel that labours under two mutually reliant objectives: the need for a form of address, and the search for an addressee. In pursuit of these aims, George casts a roaming eye across the deserts of New Mexico toward the sand dunes of Auckland's west coast; and from the end of the Pacific War through to the Vietnam War and 1989.<sup>324</sup> But nowhere does he alight on any particular event or perspective within New Zealand sufficient to draw the curtain on the bombings, and so he turns to a proxy: the imagined scenario of Vietnam War protesters exploding napalm in the districts of Auckland.<sup>325</sup> As a literary strategy, this requires a great deal of the reader. We must first forestall our incredulity that something so fanatical could happen in New Zealand of all places (readers who can recall C. K. Stead's *Smith's Dream* (1971) will have less of a problem here) and then see the explosions as constituting both a delayed reaction to and partial reflection of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As George would have us see things, the shock waves of the twin blasts, in social, ontological, and psychological terms, have taken a quarter century to reach New Zealand, where people have 'moved on' and become concerned with other matters, be they returned servicemen or antiestablishment protesters. But reading *Ocean Roads* as a novel that draws an exaggerated portrait of New Zealand protest movements at the time of the Vietnam War is to miss the author's real message, which looks sternly upon the nuclear-free amnesia present in New Zealanders of all stripes, including those of an idealistic turn. To take a stand for what one believes in is all very well, George asserts, but if one suffers from

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324 One reviewer has pointed out similarities in imagery between James George's description of New Mexico and Auckland's sand dunes, apparently believing that the parallels contain messages of shared histories between the two places. It is difficult, however, to see what the reviewer or the author intend by such connections and just as easy to observe geography as standing in for a history that barely exists in or is otherwise neglected by New Zealand society. See Louise O'Brien, "Only connect," *The Dominion Post*, 30 September 2006.

325 Writing at the time of the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, James George imagined parallels between that war (along with the subsequent insurgency) and the Vietnam War. Though this particular comparison does not find its way into *Ocean Roads*, the context at the time of writing may go some way toward explaining the author's decision to observe the Pacific War through the prism of a subsequent conflict. See Siobhan Harvey, "The Ghosts of My Life," *NZ Listener*, 14 October 2006, p. 41.



the same short-term memory as everyone else then it amounts to little more than a 'thought for the day,' not dissimilar to those at the bottom of tear-away office calendars that require one to live for the moment even as one bins the past. The antiestablishment protest rhetoric is therefore only skin deep in this novel, and its highhanded 'how-would-you-like-it?' accusatory tones have evident limits. As readers, we must stay on the lookout for scattered clues that point to nuclear-free amnesia, a condition that neither knows nor cares about the legacy of the past. We see this most strikingly when an alarm clock goes off in an Auckland park, detonating a drum of napalm and causing its hands to stop permanently at 8.15.<sup>326</sup> To anyone familiar with the circumstances of Hiroshima, the number is instantly recognisable as the time at which the *Enola Gay* released 'Little Boy' over the city, but the author offers no hint about this and, in fact, passes by the image with barely a moment's contemplation. No character ever realises the link, and there is a probability that many readers might not either. What we see here is a narrative form that has no investment in our understanding, one that remains content with allowing us to stumble through the work without a guiding hand.<sup>327</sup> If our 'general' knowledge is insufficient to realise the number's significance, we are left with little more than an Antipodean equivalent of the Weather Underground Organisation, or rather the fantasy that such a thing could have existed. But if the signature of Hiroshima is read into the text, the bomb becomes a means to confront the 'mark of an absence' that Peter Schwenger noted. What must follow is not the self-congratulation that we can tie the author's shoelaces for him, but the realisation that we are, as readers, in the line of fire so far as he is

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<sup>326</sup> James George, *Ocean Roads* (Wellington: Huia, 2006), p. 40-42.

<sup>327</sup> Further ruminations on the light- and nuclear-related images deposited in, but not fully revealed by the novel, can be found in Elizabeth DeLoughrey's reading of *Ocean Roads*. See Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Radiation Ecologies and the Wars of Light," *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 55, no. (55:3) (2009).

concerned. Our nuclear-free ignorance is taken as assumed, to such an extent that George seems almost to have washed his hands of us, leaving moments that appear to 'shed light' on the past charged with the sensation that the author has shaped them in anticipation of what we do not know. Sometimes this can be frustrating, for both characters and readers alike. An example comes when one of the bombers, Caleb, visits his father, a former Manhattan Project physicist who has been committed to an insane asylum:

'How sane do you have to be before they let you out of here?' says Caleb.

'Perhaps you're approaching it from the wrong direction,' says Isaac.

'I'd like to approach it from the direction that would see you home.'<sup>328</sup>

The moment is understandable only when Isaac's incarceration is traced to a hideous visualisation and anthropomorphising of the bomb as it is first released over Nagasaki. Having identified overmuch with the device, Isaac's mind has caved in, unable to bridge the gap between the objectives of military research institutions and the success of their endeavours as measured in effect on human targets. We therefore need to perceive Isaac's position as partly voluntary, born of the realisation that governments, military organisations, and the people they serve all exist in a state of wilful nonchalance toward the nuclear holocausts that have already happened, in the first instance, and those that may still happen, in the second. Americans do not have a monopoly on this condition, and thus Isaac has found it more bearable to separate himself from the world of 'sane' New Zealanders whose 'everyday' behaviours bespeak an unknowingness that suggests a madness of their own. If we, as readers, cannot sense this in Isaac's response then perhaps we inhabit the same condition that Isaac finds unsatisfactory and, by the end of the novel, we get several more clues that alert us to the possibility. First of all, the author punishes Caleb's ignorance by

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<sup>328</sup> George, *Ocean Roads*, p. 79.

having him contract cancer (though one would suspect that his *hibakusha* girlfriend might be more prone to it) and then allowing Caleb to publicly immolate himself as an ultimate protest.<sup>329</sup> This final scene is the most shocking of all, and provides the best instance in which Nagasaki enters the narrative in a delayed, reflected form. By now, the antiestablishment rhetoric has become considerably muted; the imagery is all, along with the crazed, chaotic responses of surrounding characters. Left behind by the blast is not revelation but unsettlement, the sense that the characters have been overcome by forces that have fallen upon them like a *tsunami*, the origin of which is far-distant, beyond the borders of the novel and our collective (non)remembering.

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### **Not Now, Not Us**

Dateline: Today. The Pacific War has never ended. The end made sure that it would not. In a practical sense, the paradox is visible in the legacy of Hiroshima as seen through its effect upon native Pacific Islanders, for whom it has signified the onset of a new series of displacements forcing them to make way for atomic testing.<sup>330</sup> Safe at home, Americans and New Zealanders can afford to move on to other affairs, secure in the knowledge of their status as a nuclear superpower and nuclear-free nation, respectively. Although their governments represent polar opposite stances on the possession of nuclear weaponry, the result in both cases is a turning of the head away from Hiroshima. What Project literature tells Americans, in simplest form, is that they can feel justly proud in having borne witness to the first, and unquestionably most difficult, scientific and engineering endeavour whose

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid., p. 363-70.

<sup>330</sup> For an examination of the preferential ways in which Americans, Europeans, and others remember the tests, see Teresia K. Teaiwa, "bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994).

objective was the production of the bomb. In the decades since the explosions themselves, Project novels have sometimes veered off into different emphases, lured by the immediacy of Red Scare or civil rights themes, but the tenor of the subgenre remains largely intractable, tied to a self-aggrandizement that allows little in the way of self-doubt. Most recently, the novels of Kanon and Gallagher have tested the boundaries somewhat, but like a prisoner confronted by an open door they appear unwilling to trust in themselves or their readers. Not now, they say, it's too soon.

If we turn to New Zealand literature, such as it is, for an alternative approach, we see a similar culture of avoidance, albeit one that has been partly forged by the post-apocalyptic imaginations of those in the northern hemisphere. With their eyes glued to the flame, as Janet Frame described it, New Zealanders have alternately felt terror and fascination at the prospect of their small islands taking on the mantle of global civilisation. A good part of James George's literary project has involved nudging, pulling, or otherwise wrenching us away from such myopia to confront the infernos of 1945, though the enormity of the endeavour can be measured in the strategies of non-disclosure the author employs. The clues to a reading that is critical of New Zealand's amnesia are there, but one must have taken the first steps toward a historically-informed self-criticism oneself; George will not do that for us. Perhaps this is tough love, of a sort, but it is most likely also informed by the realisation that many New Zealanders reinforce their nuclear-free position with dismissive platitudes to the effect of Hiroshima being largely an American concern. Not us, they say, not here.

Aside from conditions unique to each country and its culture, there remains the difficulty of how to approach Hiroshima, irrespective of one's subjectivity. At the closure of most 'good' wars, the winning side typically gain some sense of release through images,

textual, verbal, or perhaps filmic, which reassure them that the war has indeed ended, because the deepest fears of what might have happened to them have instead happened to the vanquished enemy.<sup>331</sup> The unprecedented nature of Hiroshima meant, however, that this exorcism could not properly take place because the Americans and allied powers had not felt the likelihood of an atomic attack originating from the Japanese. The bombing went beyond all other events in the Pacific. It was no less than what the 'Japs' deserved, but it was also out of all proportion. Admittedly, V-J Day brought with it rapturous celebration and, ten weeks later, there followed a 're-enactment' of the bombing in the Los Angeles Coliseum, during which a B-29 flew overhead and an explosion 'simulated' what happened to Hiroshima. But Peter Schwenger has rightly described the extravaganza as a form of 'Disneyfication' that reduced the event to spectacle in the minds of most Americans who were present.<sup>332</sup> This was not a way of looking at Hiroshima, it was non-looking. Not dissimilar were the various science fiction writings that likewise functioned as containment narratives, taking attention away from Hiroshima, partly because there were legitimate social and international issues that commanded attention in their own right, but also because Hiroshima was not something that people cared to contemplate. The net result has been lasting dissatisfaction. Unable to relish in the enemy's demise, and equally unwilling to revisit the reasons why not, Americans and New Zealanders remain in suspension where the closing moments of the Pacific War are concerned.

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331 Foster, *Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity*, p. 133.

332 Peter Schwenger and John Whittier Treat, "America's Hiroshima, Hiroshima's America," *boundary 2* 21, no. 1 (1994): p. 236.

## Conclusion

The patrol was over and yet they had so little to anticipate. The months and years ahead were very palpable to them. They were still on the treadmill; the misery, the ennui, the dislocated horror... Things would happen and time would pass, but there was no hope, no anticipation. There would be nothing but the deep cloudy dejection that overcast everything.

Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (p. 702)

Throughout Norman Mailer's epic tome of Pacific island combat, one image pervades the text more than any other: Mount Anaka, upwards at which the United States infantrymen gaze hatefully, somehow sensing that its immutable fixity constitutes an affront to the 'meaningfulness' of their plight. To reach the summit becomes, for some at least, the route towards recentralising their place upon a battlefield, and perhaps also within the war as a whole. Cursing, cajoling, and bullying one another until the peak is within sight, the men ultimately fail in their conquest (which self-terminates, in fact, after a tragicomic accident) and they scurry back down, duly chastened. This episode serves well as an allegory of Pacific War literature generally, the 'core' of which remains unreachable in ways that are foreign to the literatures of other wars. Why should this be? One can, after all, discern plenty of running themes – geographical disorientation; hatred (for one's enemy, or for the higher ranks); socio-political victimisation and disenfranchisement; and a dehumanising military bureaucracy, to name the obvious ones – and, of course, there is the racial and cultural stereotyping of the Japanese that runs through almost every novel, sometimes as a discourse against which the author takes aim, at other times merely part of the scuttlebutt that attires 'the bivouac scene.' Moreover, there is a clear progression in the topics, and to

some extent the form, of Pacific War literature. The earliest fiction writings of the 1950's and early 1960's tended to follow linear narratives, in which nationalism was a mainstay both of the text and of the characters within it. In the 1980's and the decade's aftermath, authors registered the shock that, so far as the Japanese were concerned, defeat in war had not given rise to a defeatist mindset in the business world. The American and New Zealand responses were generally confrontational, reprising fears of a non-Western other whose ambitions were on a scale as to make them frighteningly competent adversaries. Scaremongering fictions were derivative and, for a short while at least, compelling forecasts of what might come to pass if Japanese economic power remained unchecked – and yet, as economists know far better than literary scholars, the Japanese 'miracle' waxed and waned, taking with it such limpet-like offshoots as Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun*. By the late 1990's and at the turn-of-the-century, American and New Zealand writers were consistently looking to victimhood as a dominant theme and topic. Narratives were no longer always and necessarily linear; trauma emerged as a condition that supplanted and / or contested nationalism; and there was an increasing willingness to embrace the presence of Japanese nationals, or ethnic Japanese minorities, as neighbours rather than subversives. Of all the bends in the river that serve to channel Pacific War literature, these three periods, from the 1950's to today, appear most significant to me and I have structured my dissertation in order to describe and account for them. Readers may judge for themselves the success of this enterprise, but studying the literature episodically as well as chronologically has thrown up a weighty challenge that no researcher can ignore: namely, the difficulty of addressing Pacific War literature in any holistic sense when its constituent topics are forever turning a blind eye to one another. Whether one turns to American, New Zealand, or, I daresay, any other Anglophone writing on the conflict, one invariably confronts this aspect. It manifests

most obviously in the mutually exclusive, mutually implicating, topics of the FEPOW and atomic bomb victims, to the point where the researcher must mediate between the two bodies of material in order to sustain any claim to objectivity. But mediation is not resolution. Most of the time, one has to content oneself with mapping out the respective discourses, and observing how far literary novels go, if they go anywhere at all, in communicating the flesh-and-blood reality of being broken, physically or otherwise, in a Japanese prison, or scalded in the flash of an atomic explosion. The moral and historically-informed bases for each topic almost always function unilaterally, fending off attempts at comparative points of view, and withdrawing into a fortress of righteous condemnation or vindication, as the case may be. From these heights, it becomes well nigh impossible to enter into conversation with 'equivalent' positions 'on the other side,' and the result of that disjuncture, in creative terms at least, comes through in fiction writing that finds itself backed into a corner, struggling to breathe new life into old familiar stories.

Having diagnosed the condition, I shall now attend to the progress of the disease and ask whether it is terminal in every case. In my opinion, there are grounds for differentiations. It would not be true or fair to say that the FEPOW narrative, for example, has had its day; but it is reasonable to say that the hidebound stories of devilish Japanese guards have trouble finding their footing within a contemporary literary environment less given to cultural essentialisms. On the other hand, the Japanese American internment narratives – and, if we can imagine them, the as-yet-unwritten interment narratives based in New Zealand – have enduring relevance as a means of documenting the experiences of an ethnic group; but when authors turn westward toward the camps on the other side of the Pacific, alongside those on the American coast and in hinterland areas, the narrative stutters and fumbles. Understandably, most authors therefore steer clear of comparison and, for



this reason, I have come to think of Japanese American internment narratives as being self-demarcated along longitudinal lines – as a general rule, that is, novelists do not concern themselves with events that take place westward of Hawai'i, except perhaps the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Internment was always part of a Pacific-wide story, but literary history reveals an intention to render it an American story. As for the atomic bombings, these represent a 'mountain' that, as I argued in my final chapter, novelists have become past masters at avoiding. They have their reasons. Quite apart from the impossibility of 'knowing' the mass deaths and annihilation wrought by the explosions, there are the political signifiers attached to events. As the saying goes, Americans prefer to look only 'above the mushroom cloud,' while the Japanese prefer to emphasise only what happened 'below it.'<sup>333</sup> Fiction writers are aware of this, at least intuitively, which means that novel writing cannot take place outside a national-antinational binary.

Without wishing to appear too farsighted, I feel that most fiction writers who approach their chosen topic, and who do so in a fresh authorial venture, are likely to become caught in the matrix I have just described. One could imagine it differently. But in doing so, one would have to envisage some sort of 'common ground' – a bedrock of signs that signify similarly to all and sundry – upon which Anglophone writers, and Japanese writers also, may meet in relative agreement. The obvious precedent here is the wasteland of Great War literature, which allowed writers of diverse national groups to enter into literary concordance, with their own countrymen initially, but also with their wartime allies and even their former enemies. That is why, when one thinks of the Great War, one imagines the Somme, Passchendaele, Belleau Wood, and Gallipoli: bloodshed on a scale

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333 Sigeru Huzinaga, "Nazi Holocaust and Atomic Holocaust: Transforming Spiritual Crisis into an Ideology of Humanity," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 11-12(1999): p. 43-4.

that eclipses all circumstantial detail. Other images, of the Easter Rising or the Russian Revolution, for example, hover in the isles, seeming to belong to another moment or movement, despite their obvious relation to the conflict. The Great War, in other words, has a locus, a central network of images that capture our attention. The Pacific War, on the other hand, does not operate in this fashion. Try as one might, the images and topics that come to mind are too wide-ranging by far, as are the opinions and subjectivities that frame them. Indeed, were it not for the measured way in which the 'key' topics and episodes counterbalance and / or contend each other, one might be tempted to say that Pacific War literature does not exist at all in any singular sense – as things stand, the only route to follow leads to tautology: if there is a 'core' to Pacific War literature, it is reducible to – and made hollow by – this very practice of studied non-integration.

Nor does studied non-integration show any signs of abating or unravelling. On all sides of the Pacific, today's writers continue to sustain the old arrangement, the only difference being that, in their case, they have no direct experiences of the war to draw upon, and thus approach the creative process by stepping into the discursive mould of their forebears. Current affairs – public commemorations, official apologies, and high-profile cultural events – can add momentum, or provide fresh impetus, as they surely did for Jim Lehrer. They also remind people that even a slight assertion – a visit, an exhibition, a careless comment, a textbook – can cause alarming tectonic rumblings at the level of international relations. The ways in which fiction writers draw upon and feed into these affrays require of the researcher, and to some extent of general readers also, a passing acquaintance with current affairs, a demand that is seldom if ever placed upon researchers who are interested in the literature of other wars (those that are over, at least). But grounding Pacific War literature in current affairs, despite its evident occurrence in a good

few novels, is too shallow a definition of the literature as a whole. In fact, it runs the risk of reducing literary writing to a sort of subsidiary of journalism – which occasionally appears manifest, as in Michael Crichton’s case, but one could hardly sustain the same assertion in the case of, say, Peter Wells or David Guterson. Current affairs do not suffice to do these writers justice, and so one returns to studied non-integration as the only way in which to capture ‘the essence’ of Pacific War literature, albeit fleetingly. I admit that literary scholars are unlikely to take satisfaction in the term, and naturally I do not suggest it as an obligatory component to studies that concern themselves with one particular wartime episode and its literary offshoots. But those scholars who attempt to address more than one episode of the war, and who reach toward some sense of a ‘whole,’ must contest or deepen the idea of studied non-integration if Pacific War literature is to have any presence in the academy.

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